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MUNICHIANA

LOUISIANA

THE PRETTY SISTER OF JOSÉ

And then she would take the guitar . . . and sit out in the little garden.—*See p.* 165.

LOUISIANA

THE PRETTY SISTER OF JOSÉ

BY

FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
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LOUISIANA

LOUISIANA

CHAPTER I

Louisiana

Olivia Ferrol leaned back in her chair, her hands folded upon her lap. People passed and repassed her as they promenaded the long "gallery," as it was called; they passed in couples, in trios; they talked with unnecessary loudness, they laughed at their own and each other's jokes; they flirted, they sentimentalized, they criticised each other, but none of them showed any special interest in Olivia Ferrol, nor did Miss Ferrol, on her part, show much interest in them.

She had been at Oakvale Springs for two weeks. She was alone, out of her element, and knew nobody. The fact that she was a New Yorker, and had never before been so far South, was rather against her. On her arrival she had been glanced over and commented upon with candor.

"She is a Yankee," said the pretty and remarkably youthful-looking mother of an apparently grown-up family from New Orleans. "You can see it."

And though the remark was not meant to be exactly severe, Olivia felt that it was very severe, indeed, under existing circumstances. She heard it as she was giving her orders for breakfast to her own particular jet-black and highly excitable waiter, and she felt guilty at once and blushed, hastily taking a sip of ice-water to conceal her confusion. When she went up-stairs afterward she wrote a very interesting letter to her brother in New York, and tried to make an analysis of her sentiments for his edification.

"You advised me to come here because it would be novel as well as beneficial," she wrote. "And it certainly is novel. I think I feel like a Pariah—a little. I am aware that even the best-bred and most intelligent of them, hearing that I have always lived in New York, will privately regret it if they like me and remember it if they dislike me. Good-natured and warm-hearted as they seem among themselves, I am sure it will be I who will have to make the advances—if advances are made—and I must be very amiable, indeed, if I intend that they shall like me."

But she had not been well enough at first to be in the humor to make the advances, and consequently had not found her position an exciting one. She had looked on until she had been able to rouse herself to some pretty active likes and dislikes, but she knew no one.

She felt this afternoon as if this mild recreation of looking on had begun rather to pall upon her, and she drew out her watch, glancing at it with a little yawn.

"It is five o'clock," she said. "Very soon the band will make its appearance, and it will bray until the stages come in. Yes, there it is!"

The musical combination to which she referred was composed of six or seven gentlemen of color who played upon brazen instruments, each in different keys and different time. Three times a day they collected on a rustic kiosk upon the lawn and played divers popular airs with an intensity, fervor, and muscular power worthy of a better cause. They straggled up as she spoke, took their places and began, and before they had played many minutes the most exciting event of the day occurred, as it always did somewhere about this hour. In the midst of the gem of their collection was heard the rattle of wheels and the crack of whips, and through the rapturous shouts of the juvenile guests, the two venerable, rickety stages dashed

up with a lumbering flourish, and a spasmodic pretence of excitement, calculated to deceive only the feeblest mind.

At the end of the gallery they checked themselves in their mad career, the drivers making strenuous efforts to restrain the impetuosity of the four steeds whose harness rattled against their ribs with an unpleasant bony sound. Half a dozen waiters rushed forward, the doors were flung open, the steps let down with a bang, the band brayed insanely, and the passengers alighted.—"One, two, three, four," counted Olivia Ferrol, mechanically, as the first vehicle unburdened itself. And then, as the door of the second was opened: "One—only one: and a very young one, too. Dear me! Poor girl!"

This exclamation might naturally have fallen from any quick-sighted and sympathetic person. The solitary passenger of the second stage stood among the crowd, hesitating, and plainly overwhelmed with timorousness. Three waiters were wrestling with an ugly shawl, a dreadful shining valise, and a painted wooden trunk, such as is seen in country stores. In their enthusiastic desire to dispose creditably of these articles they temporarily forgot the owner, who, after one desperate, timid glance at them, looked round her in vain for succor. She was very pretty and very young and very ill-dressed—her cos-

tume a bucolic travesty on prevailing modes. She did not know where to go, and no one thought of showing her; the loungers about the office stared at her; she began to turn pale with embarrassment and timidity. Olivia Ferrol left her chair and crossed the gallery. She spoke to a servant a little sharply:

"Why not show the young lady into the parlor?" she said.

The girl heard, and looked at her helplessly, but with gratitude. The waiter darted forward with hospitable rapture.

"Dis yeah's de way, miss," he said, "right inter de 'ception-room. Foller me, ma'am."

Olivia returned to her seat. People were regarding her with curiosity, but she was entirely oblivious of the fact.

"That is one of them," she was saying, mentally. "That is one of them, and a very interesting type it is, too."

To render the peculiarities of this young woman clearer, it may be well to reveal here something of her past life and surroundings. Her father had been a literary man, her mother an illustrator of books and magazine articles. From her earliest childhood she had been surrounded by men and women of artistic or literary occupations, some who were drudges, some who were geniuses, some who balanced between

the two extremes, and she had unconsciously learned the tricks of the trade. She had been used to people who continually had their eyes open to anything peculiar and interesting in human nature, who were enraptured by the discovery of new types of men, women, and emotions. Since she had been left an orphan she had lived with her brother, who had been reporter, editor, contributor, critic, one after the other, until at last he had established a very enviable reputation as a brilliant, practical young fellow, who knew his business, and had a fine career open to him. So it was natural that, having become interested in the general friendly fashion of dissecting and studying every scrap of human nature within reach, she had followed more illustrious examples, and had become very critical upon the subject of "types" herself. During her sojourn at Oakvale she had studied the North Carolinian mountaineer "type" with the enthusiasm of an amateur. She had talked to the women in sunbonnets who brought fruit to the hotel, and sat on the steps and floor of the galleries awaiting the advent of customers with a composure only to be equalled by the calmness of the noble savage; she had walked and driven over the mountain roads, stopping at wayside houses and entering into conversation with the owners until she had

become comparatively well known, even in the space of a fortnight, and she had taken notes for her brother until she had roused him to sharing her own interest in her discoveries.

"I am sure you will find a great deal of material here," she wrote to him. "You see how I have fallen a victim to that dreadful habit of looking at everything in the light of material. A man is no longer a man—he is 'material'; sorrow is not sorrow, joy is not joy—it is 'material.' There is something rather ghoulish in it. I wonder if anatomists look at people's bodies as we do at their minds, and if to them every one is a 'subject.' At present I am interested in a species of girl I have discovered. Sometimes she belongs to the better class—the farmers, who have a great deal of land and who are the rich men of the community—sometimes she lives in a log cabin with a mother who smokes and chews tobacco, but in either case she is a surprise and a mystery. She is always pretty, she is occasionally beautiful, and in spite of her house, her people, her education or want of it, she is instinctively a refined and delicately susceptible young person. She has always been to some common school, where she has written compositions on sentimental or touching subjects, and when she belongs to the better class she takes a fashion magazine and tries to make her

dresses like those of the ladies in the colored plates, and, I may add, frequently fails. I could write a volume about her, but I won't. When your vacation arrives, come and see for yourself." It was of this class Miss Ferrol was thinking when she said: "That is one of them, and a very interesting type it is, too."

When she went in to the dining-room to partake of the six-o'clock supper, she glanced about her in search of the new arrival, but she had not yet appeared. A few minutes later, however, she entered. She came in slowly, looking straight before her, and trying very hard to appear at ease. She was prettier than before, and worse dressed. She wore a blue, much-ruffled muslin and a wide collar made of imitation lace. She had tucked her sleeves up to her elbow with a band and bow of black velvet, and her round, smooth young arms were adorable. She looked for a vacant place, and, seeing none, stopped short, as if she did not know what to do. Then some magnetic attraction drew her eye to Olivia Ferrol's. After a moment's pause, she moved timidly toward her.

"I—I wish a waiter would come," she faltered.

At that moment one on the wing stopped in obedience to a gesture of Miss Ferrol's—a delicate, authoritative movement of the head.

"Give this young lady that chair opposite me," she said.

The chair was drawn out with a flourish, the girl was seated, and the bill of fare was placed in her hands.

"Thank you," she said, in a low, astonished voice.

Olivia smiled.

"That waiter is my own special and peculiar property," she said, "and I rather pride myself on him."

But her guest scarcely seemed to comprehend her pleasantry. She looked somewhat awkward.

"I—don't know much about waiters," she ventured. "I'm not used to them, and I suppose they know it. I never was at a hotel before."

"You will soon get used to them," returned Miss Ferrol.

The girl fixed her eyes upon her with a questioning appeal. They were the loveliest eyes she had ever seen, Miss Ferrol thought—large-irised, and with wonderful long lashes fringing them and curling upward, giving them a tender, very wide-open look. She seemed suddenly to gain courage, and also to feel it her duty to account for herself.

"I shouldn't have come here alone if I could have got father to come with me," she revealed. "But he wouldn't come. He said it wasn't the

place for him. I haven't been very well since mother died, and he thought I'd better try the Springs awhile. I don't think I shall like it."

"I don't like it," replied Miss Ferrol, candidly, "but I dare say you will when you know people."

The girl glanced rapidly and furtively over the crowded room, and then her eyes fell.

"I shall never know them," she said, in a depressed undertone.

In secret Miss Ferrol felt a conviction that she was right; she had not been presented under the right auspices.

"It is rather clever and sensitive in her to find it out so quickly," she thought. "Some girls would be more sanguine, and be led into blunders."

They progressed pretty well during the meal. When it was over and Miss Ferrol rose, she became conscious that her companion was troubled by some new difficulty, and a second thought suggested to her what its nature was.

"Are you going to your room?" she asked.

"I don't know," said the girl, with the look of helpless appeal again. "I don't know where else to go. I don't like to go out there" (signifying the gallery) "alone."

"Why not come with me?" said Miss Ferrol. "Then we can promenade together."

"Ah!" she said, with a little gasp of relief and gratitude. "Don't you mind?"

"On the contrary, I shall be very glad of your society," Miss Ferrol answered. "I am alone, too."

So they went out together and wandered slowly from one end of the starlit gallery to the other, winding their way through the crowd that promenaded, and, upon the whole, finding it rather pleasant.

"I shall have to take care of her," Miss Ferrol was deciding; "but I do not think I shall mind the trouble."

The thing that touched her most was the girl's innocent trust in her sincerity—her taking for granted that this stranger, who had been polite to her, had been so not for worldly good breeding's sake, but from true friendliness and extreme generosity of nature. Her first shyness conquered, she related her whole history with the unreserve of a child. Her father was a farmer, and she had always lived with him on his farm. He had been too fond of her to allow her to leave home, and she had never been "away to school."

"He has made a pet of me at home," she said. "I was the only one that lived to be over eight years old. I am the eleventh. Ten died before I was born, and it made father and

mother worry a good deal over me—and father was worse than mother. He said the time never seemed to come when he could spare me. He is very good and kind—is father," she added, in a hurried, soft-voiced way. "He's rough, but he's very good and kind."

Before they parted for the night Miss Ferrol had the whole genealogical tree by heart. They were an amazingly prolific family, it seemed. There was Uncle Josiah, who had ten children, Uncle Leander, who had fifteen, Aunt Amanda, who had twelve, and Aunt Nervy, whose belongings comprised three sets of twins and an unlimited supply of odd numbers. They went up-stairs together and parted at Miss Ferrol's door, their rooms being near each other.

The girl held out her hand.

"Good night!" she said. "I'm so thankful I've got to know you."

Her eyes looked bigger and wider open than ever; she smiled, showing her even, sound little white teeth. Under the bright light of the lamp the freckles the day betrayed on her smooth skin were not to be seen.

"Dear me!" thought Miss Ferrol. "How startlingly pretty, in spite of the cotton lace and the dreadful polonaise!"

She touched her lightly on the shoulder.

"Why, you are as tall as I am!" she said.

"Yes," the girl replied, depressedly; "but I'm twice as broad."

"Oh, no—no such thing!" And then, with a delicate glance down over her, she said—"It is your dress that makes you fancy so. Perhaps your dressmaker does not understand your figure"—as if such a failing was the most natural and simple thing in the world, and needed only the slightest rectifying.

"I have no dressmaker," the girl answered. "I make my things myself. Perhaps that is it."

"It is a little dangerous, it is true," replied Miss Ferrol. "I have been bold enough to try it myself, and I never succeeded. I could give you the address of a very thorough woman if you lived in New York."

"But I don't live there, you see. I wish I did. I never shall, though. Father could never spare me."

Another slight pause ensued, during which she looked admiringly at Miss Ferrol. Then she said "Good night" again, and turned away.

But before she had crossed the corridor she stopped.

"I never told you my name," she said.

Miss Ferrol naturally expected she would announce it at once, but she did not. An air of embarrassment fell upon her. She seemed almost averse to speaking.

"Well," said Miss Ferrol, smiling, "what is it?"

She did not raise her eyes from the carpet as she replied, unsteadily:

"It's Louisiana."

Miss Ferrol answered her very composedly:

"The name of the State?"

"Yes. Father came from there."

"But you did not tell me your surname."

"Oh! that is Rogers. You—you didn't laugh. I thought you would."

"At the first name?" replied Miss Ferrol. "Oh, no! It is unusual—but names often are. And Louise is pretty."

"So it is," she said, brightening. "I never thought of that. I hate Louisa. They will call it 'Lowizy,' or 'Lousyanny.' I could sign myself Louise, couldn't I?"

"Yes," Miss Ferrol replied.

And then her *protégée* said "Good night" for the third time and disappeared.

CHAPTER II

Worth

She presented herself at the bedroom door with a timid knock the next morning before breakfast, evidently expecting to be taken charge of. Miss Ferrol felt sure she would appear, and had, indeed, dressed herself in momentary expectation of hearing the knock.

When she heard it she opened the door at once.

"I am glad to see you," she said. "I thought you might come."

A slight expression of surprise showed itself in the girl's eyes. It had never occurred to her that she might not come.

"Oh, yes!" she replied. "I never could go down alone when there was any one who would go with me."

There was something on her mind, Miss Ferrol fancied, and presently it burst forth in a confidential inquiry.

"Is this dress very short-waisted?" she asked, with great earnestness.

Merciful delicacy stood in the way of Miss

Ferrol's telling her how short-waisted it was, and how it maltreated her beautiful young body.

"It is rather short-waisted, it is true."

"Perhaps," the girl went on, with a touch of guileless melancholy, "I am naturally this shape."

Here, it must be confessed, Miss Ferrol forgot herself for the moment, and expressed her indignation with undue fervor.

"Perish the thought!" she exclaimed. "Why, child! your figure is a hundred times better than mine."

Louisiana wore for a moment a look of absolute fright.

"Oh, no!" she cried. "Oh, no! Your figure is magnificent."

"Magnificent!" echoed Miss Ferrol, giving way to her enthusiasm, and indulging in figures of speech. "Don't you see that I am thin—absolutely thin. But my things fit me, and my dressmaker understands me. If you were dressed as I am"—pausing to look her over from head to foot—"ah!" she exclaimed pathetically, "how I should like to see you in some of my clothes!"

A tender chord was touched. A gentle sadness, aroused by this instance of wasted opportunities, rested upon her. But instantaneously she brightened, seemingly without any

particular cause. A brilliant idea had occurred to her. But she did not reveal it.

"I will wait," she thought, "until she is more at her ease with me."

She really was more at her ease already. Just this one little scrap of conversation had done that. She became almost affectionate in a shy way before they reached the dining-room.

"I want to ask you something," she said, as they neared the door.

"What is it?"

She held Miss Ferrol back with a light clasp on her arm. Her air was quite tragic in a small way.

"Please say 'Louise,' when you speak to me," she said. "Never say 'Miss Louisiana'—never—never!"

"No, I shall never say 'Miss Louisiana,'" her companion answered. "How would you like 'Miss Rogers'?"

"I would rather have 'Louise,'" she said, disappointedly.

"Well," returned Miss Ferrol, "'Louise' let it be."

And "Louise" it was thenceforward. If she had not been so pretty, so innocent, and so affectionate and humble a young creature, she might have been troublesome at times (it occurred to Olivia Ferrol), she clung so pertina-

ciously to their chance acquaintanceship; she was so helpless and desolate if left to herself, and so inordinately glad to be taken in hand again. She made no new friends—which was perhaps natural enough, after all. She had nothing in common with the young women who played ten-pins and croquet and rode out in parties with their cavaliers. She was not of them, and understood them as little as they understood her. She knew very well that they regarded her with scornful tolerance when they were of the ill-natured class, and with ill-subdued wonder when they were amiable. She could not play ten-pins or croquet, nor could she dance.

"What are the men kneeling down for, and why do they keep stopping to put on those queer little caps and things?" she whispered to Miss Ferrol one night.

"They are trying to dance a German," replied Miss Ferrol, "and the man who is leading them only knows one figure."

As for the riding, she had been used to riding all her life; but no one asked her to join them, and if they had done so she would have been too wise—unsophisticated as she was—to accept the invitation. So where Miss Ferrol was seen she was seen also, and she was never so happy as when she was invited into her protector's room and allowed to spend the morning or

evening there. She would have been content to sit there forever and listen to Miss Ferrol's graphic description of life in the great world. The names of celebrated personages made small impression upon her. It was revealed gradually to Miss Ferrol that she had private doubts as to the actual existence of some of them, and the rest she had never heard of before.

"You never read 'The Scarlet Letter'?" asked her instructress upon one occasion.

She flushed guiltily.

"No," she answered. "Nor—nor any of the others."

Miss Ferrol gazed at her silently for a few moments. Then she asked her a question in a low voice, specially mellowed, so that it might not alarm her.

"Do you know who John Stuart Mill is?" she said.

"No," she replied from the dust of humiliation.

"Have you never heard—just *heard*—of Ruskin?"

"No."

"Nor of Michael Angelo?"

"N-no—ye-es, I think so—perhaps, but I don't know what he did."

"Do you," she continued, very slowly, "do—you—know—anything—about—Worth?"

"No, nothing."

Her questioner clasped her hands with repressed emotion.

"Oh," she cried, "how—how you have been neglected!"

She was really depressed, but her *protégée* was so much more deeply so that she felt it her duty to contain herself and return to cheerfulness.

"Never mind," she said. "I will tell you all I know about them, and"—after a pause for speculative thought upon the subject—"by the by, it isn't much, and I will lend you some books to read, and give you a list of some you must persuade your father to buy for you, and you will be all right. It is rather dreadful not to know the names of people and things; but, after all, I think there are very few people who —ahem!"

She was checked here by rigid conscientious scruples. If she was to train this young mind in the path of learning and literature, she must place before her a higher standard of merit than the somewhat shady and slipshod one her eagerness had almost betrayed her into upholding. She had heard people talk of "standards" and "ideals," and when she was kept to the point and in regulation working order, she could be very eloquent upon these subjects herself.

"You will have to work very seriously," she

remarked, rather incongruously and with a rapid change of position. "If you wish to—to acquire anything, you must read conscientiously and—and with a purpose." She was rather proud of that last clause.

"Must I?" inquired Louise, humbly. "I should like to—if I knew where to begin. Who was Worth? Was he a poet?"

Miss Ferrol acquired a fine, high color very suddenly.

"Oh!" she answered, with some uneasiness, "you—you have no need to begin with Worth. He doesn't matter so much—really."

"I thought," Miss Rogers said meekly, "that you were more troubled about my not having read what he wrote, than about my not knowing any of the others."

"Oh, no! You see—the fact is, he—he never wrote anything."

"What did he do?" she asked, anxious for information.

"He—it isn't 'did,' it is 'does.' He—makes dresses."

"Dresses!"

This single word, but no exclamation-point could express its tone of wild amazement.

"Yes."

"A man!"

"Yes."

There was a dead silence. It was embarrassing at first. Then the amazement of the unsophisticated one began to calm itself; it gradually died down, and became another emotion, merging itself into interest.

"Does"—guilelessly she inquired—"he make nice ones?"

"Nice!" echoed Miss Ferrol. "They are works of art! I have got three in my trunk."

"O-o-h!" sighed Louisiana. "Oh, dear!"

Miss Ferrol rose from her chair.

"I will show them to you," she said. "I—I should like you to try them on."

"To try them on!" ejaculated the child in an awe-stricken tone. "Me?"

"Yes," said Miss Ferrol, unlocking the trunk and throwing back the lid. "I have been wanting to see you in them since the first day you came."

She took them out and laid them upon the bed on their trays. Louise got up from the floor and approaching, reverently stood near them. There was a cream-colored evening-dress of soft, thick, close-clinging silk of some antique-modern sort; it had golden fringe, and golden flowers embroidered upon it.

"Look at that," said Miss Ferrol softly—even religiously.

She made a mysterious, majestic gesture.

"Come here," she said. "You must put it on."

Louise shrank back a pace.

"I—oh! I daren't," she cried. "It is too beautiful!"

"Come here," repeated Miss Ferrol.

She obeyed timorously, and gave herself into the hands of her controller. She was so timid and excited that she trembled all the time her toilette was being performed for her. Miss Ferrol went through this service with the manner of a priestess officiating at an altar. She laced up the back of the dress with the slender, golden cords; she arranged the antique drapery which wound itself around in close swathing folds. There was not the shadow of a wrinkle from shoulder to hem: the lovely young figure was revealed in all its beauty of outline. There were no sleeves at all, there was not very much bodice, but there was a great deal of effect, and this, it is to be supposed, was the object.

"Walk across the floor," commanded Miss Ferrol.

Louisiana obeyed her.

"Do it again," said Miss Ferrol.

Having been obeyed for the second time, her hands fell together. Her attitude and expression could be said to be significant only of rapture.

"I said so!" she cried. "I said so! You might have been born in New York!"

It was a grand climax. Louisiana felt it to the depths of her reverent young heart. But she could not believe it. She was sure that it was too sublime to be true. She shook her head in deprecation.

"It is no exaggeration," said Miss Ferrol, with renewed fervor. "Laurence himself, if he were not told that you had lived here, would never guess it. I should like to try you on him."

"Who—is he?" inquired Louisiana. "Is he a writer, too?"

"Well, yes—but not exactly like the others. He is my brother."

It was two hours before this episode ended. Only at the sounding of the second bell did Louisiana escape to her room to prepare for dinner.

Miss Ferrol began to replace the dresses in her trunk. She performed her task in an abstracted mood. When she had completed it she stood upright and paused a moment, with quite a startled air.

"Dear me!" she exclaimed. "I—actually forgot about Ruskin!"

CHAPTER III

"He Is Different"

THE same evening, as they sat on one of the seats upon the lawn, Miss Ferrol became aware several times that Louisiana was regarding her with more than ordinary interest. She sat with her hands folded upon her lap, her eyes fixed on her face, and her pretty mouth actually a little open.

"What are you thinking of?" Olivia asked, at length.

The girl started, and recovered herself with an effort.

"I—well, I was thinking about—authors," she stammered.

"Any particular author?" inquired Olivia, "or authors as a class?"

"About your brother being one. I never thought I should see any one who knew an author—and you are related to one!"

Her companion's smile was significant of immense experience. It was plain that she was so accustomed to living on terms of intimacy with any number of authors that she could afford to feel indifferent about them.

"My dear," she said, amiably, "they are not in the least different from other people."

It sounded something like blasphemy.

"Not different!" cried Louisiana. "Oh, surely, they must be! Isn't—isn't your brother different?"

Miss Ferrol stopped to think. She was very fond of her brother. Privately she considered him the literary man of his day. She was simply disgusted when she heard experienced critics only calling him "clever" and "brilliant" instead of "great" and "world-moving."

"Yes," she replied at length, "he is different."

"I thought he must be," said Louisiana, with a sigh of relief. "You are, you know."

"Am I?" returned Olivia. "Thank you. But I am not an author—at least"—she added, guiltily, "nothing I have written has ever been published."

"Oh! why not?" exclaimed Louisiana.

"Why not?" she repeated, dubiously and thoughtfully. And then, knitting her brows, she said, "I don't know why not."

"I am sure if you have ever written anything, it ought to have been published," protested her adorer.

"*I* thought so," said Miss Ferrol. "But—but *they* didn't."

"They?" echoed Louisiana. "Who are 'they'?"

"The editors," she replied, in a rather gloomy manner. "There is a great deal of wire-pulling, and favoritism, and—even envy and malice, of which those outside know nothing. You wouldn't understand it if I should tell you about it."

For a few moments she wore quite a fell expression, and gloom reigned. She gave her head a little shake.

"They regret it afterward," she remarked—"frequently."

From which Louisiana gathered that it was the editors who were so overwhelmed, and she could not help sympathizing with them in secret. There was something in the picture of their unavailing remorse which touched her, despite her knowledge of the patent fact that they deserved it and could expect nothing better. She was quite glad when Olivia brightened up, as she did presently.

"Laurence is handsomer than most of them, and has a more distinguished air," she said. "He is very charming. People always say so."

"I wish I could see him," ventured Louisiana.

"You will see him if you stay here much longer," replied Miss Ferrol. "It is quite likely he will come to Oakvale."

For a moment Louisiana fluttered and turned pale with pleasure, but as suddenly she drooped.

"I forgot," she faltered. "You will have to be with him always, and I shall have no one. He won't want me."

Olivia sat and looked at her with deepening interest. She was thinking again of a certain whimsical idea which had beset her several times since she had attired her *protégée* in the cream-colored robe.

"Louise," she said, in a low, mysterious tone, "how would you like to wear dresses like mine all the rest of the time you are here?"

The child stared at her blankly.

"I haven't got any," she gasped.

"No," said Miss Ferrol, with deliberation, "but *I* have."

She rose from her seat, dropping her mysterious air and smiling encouragingly.

"Come with me to my room," she said. "I want to talk to you."

If she had ordered her to follow her to the stake it is not at all unlikely that Louisiana would have obeyed. She got up meekly, smiling, too, and feeling sure something very interesting was going to happen. She did not understand in the least, but she was quite tractable. And after they had reached the room and shut themselves in, she found that it *was* something very interesting which was to happen.

"You remember what I said to you this morning?" Miss Ferrol suggested.

"You said so many things."

"Oh! but you cannot have forgotten this particular thing. I said you looked as if you had been born in New York."

Louisiana remembered with a glow of rapture.

"Oh, yes!" she answered.

"And I said Laurence himself would not know, if he was not told, that you had lived all your life here."

"Yes."

"And I said I should like to try you on him."

"Yes."

Miss Ferrol kept her eyes fixed on her and watched her closely.

"I have been thinking of it all the morning," she added. "I should like to try you on him."

Louisiana was silent a moment. Then she spoke, hesitatingly:

"Do you mean that I should pretend—," she began.

"Oh, no!" interrupted Miss Ferrol. "Not pretend either one thing or the other. Only let me dress you as I choose, and then take care that you say nothing whatever about your past life. You will have to be rather quiet, perhaps, and let him talk. He will like that, of course

—men always do—and then you will learn a great many things from him."

"It will be—a very strange thing to do," said Louisiana.

"It will be a very interesting thing," answered Olivia, her enthusiasm increasing. "How he will admire you!"

Louisiana indulged in one of her blushes.

"Have you a picture of him?"

"Yes. Why?" she asked, in some surprise.

"Because I should like to see his face."

"Do you think," Miss Ferrol said, in further bewilderment, "that you might not like him?"

"I think he might not like me."

"Not like you!" cried Miss Ferrol. "You! He will think you are divine—when you are dressed as I shall dress you."

She went to her trunk and produced the picture. It was not a phtograph, but a little crayon head—the head of a handsome man, whose expression was a singular combination of dreaminess and alertness. It was a fascinating face.

"One of his friends did it," said Miss Ferrol. "His friends are very fond of him and admire his good looks very much. They protest against his being photographed. They like to sketch him. They are always making 'studies' of his head. What do you think of him?"

Louisiana hesitated.

"He is different," she said at last. "I thought he would be."

She gave the picture back to Miss Ferrol, who replaced it in her trunk. She sat for a few seconds looking down at the carpet and apparently seeing very little. Then she looked up at her companion, who was suddenly a little embarrassed at finding her receive her whimsical planning so seriously. She herself had not thought of it as being serious at all. It would be interesting and amusing, and would prove her theory.

"I will do what you want me to do," said Louisiana.

"Then," said Miss Ferrol, wondering at an unexpected sense of discomfort in herself, "I will dress you for supper now. You must begin to wear the things, so that you may get used to them."

CHAPTER IV

A New Type

When the two entered the supper-room together a little commotion was caused by their arrival. At first the supple young figure in violet and gray was not recognized. It was not the figure people had been used to, it seemed so tall and slenderly round. The reddish-brown hair was combed high and made into soft puffs; it made the pretty head seem more delicately shaped, and showed how white and graceful the back of the slender neck was. It was several minutes before the problem was solved. Then a sharp young woman exclaimed, *sotto voce:*

"It's the little country-girl, in new clothes—in clothes that fit. Would you believe it?"

"Don't look at your plate so steadily," whispered Miss Ferrol. "Lean back and fan yourself as if you did not hear. You must never show that you hear things."

"I shall be obliged to give her a few hints now and then," she had said to herself beforehand. "But I feel sure when she once catches the cue she will take it."

It really seemed as if she did, too. She had looked at herself long and steadily after she had been dressed, and when she turned away from the glass she held her head a trifle more erect, and her cheeks had reddened. Perhaps what she had recognized in the reflection she had seen had taught her a lesson. But she said nothing. In a few days Olivia herself was surprised at the progress she had made. Sanguine as she was, she had not been quite prepared for the change which had taken place in her. She had felt sure it would be necessary to teach her to control her emotions, but suddenly she seemed to have learned to control them without being told to do so; she was no longer demonstrative of her affection, she no longer asked innocent questions, nor did she ever speak of her family. Her reserve was puzzling to Olivia.

"You are very clever," she said to her one day, the words breaking from her in spite of herself, after she had sat regarding her in silence for a few minutes. "You are even cleverer than I thought you were, Louise."

"Was that very clever?" the girl asked.

"Yes, it was," Olivia answered, "but not so clever as you are proving yourself."

But Louisiana did not smile or blush, as she had expected she would. She sat very quietly,

showing neither pleasure nor shyness, and seeming for a moment or so to be absorbed in thought.

In the evening when the stages came in they were sitting on the front gallery together. As the old rattletraps bumped and swung themselves up the gravel drive, Olivia bent forward to obtain a better view of the passengers.

"He ought to be among them," she said.

Louisiana laid her hand on her arm.

"Who is that sitting with the driver?" she asked, as the second vehicle passed them. "Isn't that——"

"To be sure it is!" exclaimed Miss Ferrol.

She would have left her seat, but she found herself detained. Her companion had grasped her wrist.

"Wait a minute!" she said. "Don't leave me! Oh—I wish I had not done it!"

Miss Ferrol turned and stared at her in amazement.

She spoke in her old, uncontrolled, childish fashion. She was pale, and her eyes were dilated.

"What is the matter?" said Miss Ferrol, hurriedly, when she found her voice. "Is it that you really don't like the idea? If you don't, there is no need of our carrying it out. It was only nonsense—I beg your pardon for not seeing

that it disturbed you. Perhaps, after all, it was very bad taste in me——"

But she was not allowed to finish her sentence. As suddenly as it had altered before, Louisiana's expression altered again. She rose to her feet with a strange little smile. She looked into Miss Ferrol's astonished face steadily and calmly.

"Your brother has seen you and is coming toward us," she said. "I will leave you. We shall see each other again at supper."

And with a little bow she moved away with an air of composure which left her instructress stunned. She could scarcely recover her equilibrium sufficiently to greet her brother decently when he reached her side. She had never been so thoroughly at sea in her life.

After she had gone to her room that night, her brother came and knocked at the door.

When she opened it and let him in he walked to a chair and threw himself into it, wearing a rather excited look.

"Olivia," he began at once, "what a bewildering girl!"

Olivia sat down opposite to him, with a composed smile.

"Miss Rogers, of course?" she said.

"Of course," he echoed. And then, after a

pause of two or three seconds, he added, in the tone he had used before: "What a delightfully mysterious girl!"

"Mysterious!" repeated Olivia.

"There is no other word for it! She has such an adorable face, she looks so young, and she says so little." And then, with serious delight, he added: "It is a new type!"

Olivia began to laugh.

"Why are you laughing?" he demanded.

"Because I was so sure you would say that," she answered. "I was waiting for it."

"But it is true," he replied, quite vehemently. "I never saw anything like her before. I look at her great soft eyes and I catch glimpses of expression which don't seem to belong to the rest of her. When I see her eyes I could fancy for a moment that she had been brought up in a convent or had lived a very simple, isolated life, but when she speaks and moves I am bewildered. I want to hear her talk, but she says so little. She does not even dance. I suppose her relatives are serious people. I dare say you have not heard much of them from her. Her reserve is so extraordinary in a girl. I wonder how old she is?"

"Nineteen, I think."

"I thought so. I never saw anything prettier than her quiet way when I asked her to dance

with me. She said simply: 'I do not dance. I have never learned.' It was as if she had never thought of it as being an unusual thing."

He talked of her all the time he remained in the room. Olivia had never seen him so interested before.

"The fascination is that she seems to be two creatures at once," he said. "And one of them is stronger than the other and will break out and reveal itself one day. I begin by feeling I do not understand her, and that is the most interesting of all beginnings. I long to discover which of the two creatures is the real one."

When he was going away he stopped suddenly to say:

"How was it you never mentioned her in your letters? I can't understand that."

"I wanted you to see her for yourself," Olivia answered. "I thought I would wait."

"Well," he said, after thinking a moment, "I am glad, after all, that you did."

CHAPTER V

"I Have Hurt You"

From the day of his arrival a new life began for Louisiana. She was no longer an obscure and unconsidered young person. Suddenly, and for the first time in her life, she found herself vested with a marvellous power. It was a power girls of a different class from her own are vested with from the beginning of their lives. They are used to it and regard it as their birthright. Louisiana was not used to it. There had been nothing like it attending her position as "that purty gal o' Rogerses." She was accustomed to the admiration of men she was indifferent to—men who wore short-waisted blue-jean coats, and turned upon their elbows to stare at her as she sat in the little white frame church. After making an effort to cultivate her acquaintance, they generally went away disconcerted. "She's mighty still," they said. "She hain't got nothin' to say. Seems like thar ain't much to her—but she's powerful purty though."

This was nothing like her present experience.

She began slowly to realize that she was a little like a young queen now. Here was a man such as she had never spoken to before, who was always ready to endeavor to his utmost to please her: who, without any tendency toward sentimental nonsense, was plainly the happier for her presence and favor. What could be more assiduous and gallant than the every-day behavior of the well-bred, thoroughly experienced young man of the period toward the young beauty who for the moment reigns over his fancy! It need only be over his fancy; there is no necessity that the impression should be any deeper. His suavity, his chivalric air, his ready wit in her service, are all that could be desired.

When Louisiana awakened to the fact that all this homage was rendered to her as being only the natural result of her girlish beauty—as if it was the simplest thing in the world, and a state of affairs which must have existed from the first —she experienced a sense of terror. Just at the very first she would have been glad to escape from it and sink into her old obscurity.

"It does not belong to me," she said to herself. "It belongs to some one else—to the girl he thinks I am. I am not that girl, though; I will remember that."

But in a few days she calmed down. She told herself that she always did remember, but

she ceased to feel frightened and was more at ease. She never talked very much, but she became more familiar with the subjects she heard discussed. One morning she went to Olivia's room and asked her for the address of a bookseller.

"I want to send for some books and—and magazines," she said confusedly. "I wish you —if you would tell me what to send for. Father will give me the money if I ask him for it."

Olivia sat down and made a list. It was a long list, comprising the best periodicals of the day and several standard books.

When she handed it to her she regarded her with curiosity.

"You mean to read them all?" she asked.

"Isn't it time that I should?" replied her pupil.

"Well—it is a good plan," returned Olivia rather absently.

Truth to tell, she was more puzzled every day. She had begun to be quite sure that something had happened. It seemed as if a slight coldness existed between herself and her whilom adorer. The simplicity of her enthusiasm was gone. Her affection had changed as her outward bearing. It was a better-regulated and less noticeable emotion. Once or twice Olivia fancied she had seen the girl looking at her even sadly, as if she felt, for the moment, a sense of some loss.

"Perhaps it was very clumsy in me," she used to say to herself. "Perhaps I don't understand her, after all."

But she could not help looking on with interest. She had never before seen Laurence enjoy himself so thoroughly. He had been working very hard during the past year, and was ready for his holiday. He found the utter idleness, which was the chief feature of the place, a good thing. There was no town or village within twenty miles, newspapers were a day or two old when they arrived, there were very few books to be found, and there was absolutely no excitement. At night the band brayed in the empty-looking ballroom, and a few very young couples danced in a desultory fashion and without any ceremony. The primitive, domesticated slowness of the place was charming. Most of the guests had come from the far South at the beginning of the season and would remain until the close of it; so they had had time to become familiar with each other and to throw aside restraint.

"There is nothing to distract one," Ferrol said, "nothing to rouse one, nothing to inspire one—nothing! It is delicious! Why didn't I know of it before?"

He had plenty of time to study his sister's friend. She rode and walked with him and

Olivia when they made their excursions, she listened while he read aloud to them as he lay on the grass in a quiet corner of the grounds. He thought her natural reserve held her from expressing her opinion on what he read very freely; it certainly did not occur to him that she was beginning her literary education under his guidance. He could see that the things which pleased him most were not lost upon her. Her face told him that. One moonlight night, as they sat on an upper gallery, he began to speak of the novelty of the aspect of the country as it presented itself to an outsider who saw it for the first time.

"It is a new life, and a new people," he said. "And, by the way, Olivia, where is the new species of young woman I was to see—the daughter of the people who does not belong to her sphere?"

He turned to Louisiana.

"Have you ever seen her?" he asked. "I must confess to a dubiousness on the subject."

Before he could add another word Louisiana turned upon him. He could see her face clearly in the moonlight. It was white, and her eyes were dilated and full of fire.

"Why do you speak in that way?" she cried. "As if—as if such people were so far beneath you. What right have you——"

She stopped suddenly. Laurence Ferrol was gazing at her in amazement. She rose from her seat, trembling.

"I will go away a little," she said. "I beg your pardon—and Miss Ferrol's."

She turned her back upon them and went away. Ferrol sat holding her little round, white-feather fan helplessly, and staring after her until she disappeared.

It was several seconds before the silence was broken. It was he who broke it.

"I don't know what it means," he said, in a low voice. "I don't know what I have done!"

In a little while he got up and began to roam aimlessly about the gallery. He strolled from one end to the other with his hands thrust in his coat pockets. Olivia, who had remained seated, knew that he was waiting in hopes that Louisiana would return. He had been walking to and fro, looking as miserable as possible, for about half an hour, when at last she saw him pause and turn half-round before the open door of an upper corridor leading out upon the veranda. A black figure stood revealed against the inside light. It was Louisiana, and, after hesitating a moment, she moved slowly forward.

She had not recovered her color, but her manner was perfectly quiet.

"I am glad you did not go away," she said.

Ferrol had only stood still at first, waiting her pleasure, but the instant she spoke he made a quick step toward her.

"I should have felt it a very hard thing not to have seen you again before I slept," he said.

She made no reply, and they walked together in silence until they reached the opposite end of the gallery.

"Miss Ferrol has gone in," she said then.

He turned to look and saw that such was the case. Suddenly, for some reason best known to herself, Olivia had disappeared from the scene.

Louisiana leaned against one of the slender, supporting pillars of the gallery. She did not look at Ferrol, but at the blackness of the mountains rising before them. Ferrol could not look away from her.

"If you had not come out again," he said, after a pause, "I think I should have remained here, baying at the moon, all night."

Then, as she made no reply, he began to pour himself forth quite recklessly.

"I cannot quite understand how I hurt you," he said. "It seemed to me that I must have hurt you, but even while I don't understand, there are no words abject enough to express what I feel now and have felt during the last half-hour. If I only dared ask you to tell me——"

She stopped him.

"I can't tell you," she said. "But it is not your fault—it is nothing you could have understood—it is my fault—all my fault, and—I deserve it."

He was terribly discouraged.

"I am bewildered," he said. "I am very unhappy."

She turned her pretty, pale face round to him swiftly.

"It is not you who need be unhappy," she exclaimed. "It is I!"

The next instant she had checked herself again, just as she had done before.

"Let us talk of something else," she said coldly.

"It will not be easy for me to do so," he answered, "but I will try."

Before Olivia went to bed she had a visit from her.

She received her with some embarrassment, it must be confessed. Day by day she felt less at ease with her and more deeply self-convicted of some blundering—which, to a young woman of her temperament, was a sharp penalty.

Louisiana would not sit down. She revealed her purpose in coming at once.

"I want to ask you to make me a promise," she said, "and I want to ask your pardon."

"Don't do that," said Olivia.

"I want you to promise that you will not tell your brother the truth until you have left here and are at home. I shall go away very soon. I am tired of what I have been doing. It is different from what you meant it to be. But you must promise that if you stay after I have gone—as of course you will—you will not tell him. My home is only a few miles away. You might be tempted, after thinking it over, to come and see me—and I should not like it. I want it all to stop here—I mean my part of it. I don't want to know the rest."

Olivia had never felt so helpless in her life. She had neither self-poise, nor tact, nor any other daring quality left.

"I wish," she faltered, gazing at the girl quite pathetically, "I wish we had never begun it."

"So do I," said Louisiana. "Do you promise?"

"Y-yes. I would promise anything. I—I have hurt your feelings," she confessed, in an outbreak.

She was destined to receive a fresh shock. All at once the girl was metamorphosed again. It was her old ignorant, sweet, simple self who stood there, with trembling lips and dilated eyes.

"Yes, you have!" she cried. "Yes, you have!"

And she burst into tears and turned about and ran out of the room.

CHAPTER VI

The Road to the Right

THE morning after, Ferrol heard an announcement which came upon him like a clap of thunder.

After breakfast, as they walked about the grounds, Olivia, who had seemed to be in an abstracted mood, said, without any preface:

"Miss Rogers returns home to-morrow."

Laurence stopped short in the middle of the path.

"To-morrow!" he exclaimed. "Oh, no!"

He glanced across at Louisiana with an anxious face.

"Yes," she said, "I am going home."

"To New York?"

"I do not live in New York."

She spoke quite simply, but the words were a shock to him. They embarrassed him. There was no coldness in her manner, no displeasure in her tone, but, of course, he understood that it would be worse than tactless to inquire further. Was it possible that she did not care that he should know where she lived? There seemed no

other construction to be placed upon her words. He flushed a little, and for a few minutes looked rather gloomy, though he quickly recovered himself afterward and changed the subject with creditable readiness.

"Did not you tell me she lived in New York?" he asked Olivia, the first time they were alone together.

"No," Olivia answered a trifle sharply. "Why New York, more than another place?"

"For no reason whatever—really," he returned, more bewildered than ever. "There *was* no reason why I should choose New York, only when I spoke to her of certain places there, she—she——"

He paused and thought the matter over carefully before finishing his sentence. He ended it at last in a singular manner.

"She said nothing," he said. "It is actually true—now I think of it—she said nothing whatever!"

"And because she said nothing whatever—" began Olivia.

He drew his hand across his forehead with a puzzled gesture.

"I fancied she *looked* as if she knew," he said, slowly. "I am sure she looked as if she knew what I was talking about—as if she knew the places, I mean. It is very queer! There seems

no reason in it. Why shouldn't she wish us to know where she lives?"

"I—I must confess," cried Olivia, "that I am getting a little tired of her."

It was treacherous and vicious, and she knew it was; but her guilty conscience and her increasing sense of having bungled drove her to desperation. If she had not promised to keep the truth to herself, she would have been only too glad to unburden herself. It was so stupid, after all, and she had only herself to blame.

Laurence drew a long breath.

"You cannot be tired of *her!*" he said. "That is impossible. She takes firmer hold upon one every hour."

This was certainly true, as far as he was concerned. He was often even surprised at his own enthusiasm. He had seen so many pretty women that it was almost inconsistent that he should be so much moved by the prettiness of one charming creature, and particularly one who spoke so little, who, after all, was—but there he always found himself at a full stop. He could not say what she was, he did not know yet; really, he seemed no nearer the solution of the mystery than he had been at first. There lay the fascination. He felt so sure there was an immense deal for him to discover, if he could only discover it. He had an ideal in his mind,

and this ideal, he felt confident, was the real creature, if he could only see her. During the episode on the upper gallery he fancied he had caught a glimpse of what was to be revealed. The sudden passion on her pale young face, the fire in her eyes, were what he had dreamed of.

If he had not been possessed of courage and an honest faith in himself, born of a goodly amount of success, he would have been far more depressed than he was. She was going away, and had not encouraged him to look forward to their meeting again.

"I own it is rather bad to look at," he said to himself, "if one quite believed that Fate would serve one such an ill turn. She never played me such a trick, however, and I won't believe she will. I shall see her again—some time. It will turn out fairly enough, surely."

So with this consolation he supported himself. There was one day left and he meant to make the best of it. It was to be spent in driving to a certain mountain, about ten miles distant. All tourists who were possessed of sufficient energy made this excursion as a matter of duty, if from no more enthusiastic motive. A strong, light carriage and a pair of horses were kept in the hotel stables for the express purpose of conveying guests to this special point.

This vehicle Ferrol had engaged the day be-

fore, and as matters had developed he had cause to congratulate himself upon the fact. He said to Louisiana what he had before said to himself:

"We have one day left, and we will make the best of it."

Olivia, who stood upon the gallery before which the carriage had been drawn up, glanced at Louisiana furtively. On her part she felt privately that it would be rather hard to make the best of it. She wished that it was well over. But Louisiana did not return her glance. She was looking at Ferrol and the horses. She had done something new this morning. She had laid aside her borrowed splendor and attired herself in one of her own dresses, which she had had the boldness to remodel. She had seized a hint from some one of Olivia's possessions, and had given her costume a pretty air of primitive simplicity. It was a plain white lawn, with a little frilled cape or fichu which crossed upon her breast and was knotted loosely behind. She had a black velvet ribbon around her lithe waist, a rose in her bosom where the fichu crossed, and a broad Gainsborough hat upon her head. One was reminded somewhat of the picturesque young woman of the good old colony times. Ferrol, at least, when he first caught sight of her, was reminded of pictures he had seen of them.

There was no trace of her last night's fire in her manner. She was quieter than usual through the first part of the drive. She was gentle to submissiveness to Olivia. There was something even tender in her voice once or twice when she addressed her. Laurence noticed it, and accounted for it naturally enough.

"She is really fonder of her than she has seemed," he thought, "and she is sorry that their parting is so near."

He was just arriving at this conclusion when Louisiana touched his arm.

"Don't take that road," she said.

He drew up his horses and looked at her with surprise. There were two roads before them, and he had been upon the point of taking the one to the right.

"But it is the only road to take," he continued. "The other does not lead to the mountain. I was told to be sure to take the road to the right hand."

"It is a mistake," she said, in a disturbed tone. "The left-hand road leads to the mountain, too—at least, we can reach it by striking the wagon-road through the woods. I—yes, I am sure of it."

"But this is the better road. Is there any reason why you prefer the other? Could you pilot us? If you can——"

He stopped and looked at her appealingly.

He was ready to do anything she wished, but the necessity for his yielding had passed. Her face assumed a set look.

"I can't," she answered. "Take the road to the right. Why not?"

CHAPTER VII

"She Ain't Yere"

Ferrol was obliged to admit when they turned their faces homeward that the day was hardly a success, after all. Olivia had not been at her best, for some reason or other, and from the moment they had taken the right-hand road Louisiana had been wholly incomprehensible.

In her quietest mood she had never worn a cold air before; to-day she had been cold and unresponsive. It had struck him that she was absorbed in thinking of something which was quite beyond him. She was plainly not thinking of him, nor of Olivia, nor of the journey they were making. During the drive she had sat with her hands folded upon her lap, her eyes fixed straight before her. She had paid no attention to the scenery, only rousing herself to call their attention to one object. This object was a house they passed—the rambling, low-roofed white house of some well-to-do farmer. It was set upon a small hill and had a long front porch, mottled with blue and white paint in a sanguine attempt at imitating variegated marble.

She burst into a low laugh when she saw it.

"Look at that," she said. "That is one of the finest houses in the country. The man who owns it is counted a rich man among his neighbors."

Ferrol put up his eye-glasses to examine it. (It is to be deplored that he was a trifle near-sighted.)

"By George!" he said. "That is an idea, isn't it, that marble business! I wonder who did it? Do you know the man who lives there?"

"I have heard of him," she answered, "from several people. He is a namesake of mine. His name is Rogers."

When they returned to their carriage, after a ramble up the mountainside, they became conscious that the sky had suddenly darkened. Ferrol looked up, and his face assumed a rather serious expression.

"If either of you is weather-wise," he said, "I wish you would tell me what that cloud means. You have been among the mountains longer than I have."

Louisiana glanced upward quickly.

"It means a storm," she said, "and a heavy one. We shall be drenched in half an hour."

Ferrol looked at her white dress and the little frilled fichu, which was her sole protection.

"Oh, but that won't do!" he exclaimed. "What insanity in me not to think of umbrellas!"

"Umbrellas!" echoed Louisiana. "If we had each six umbrellas they could not save us. We may as well get into the carriage. We are only losing time."

They were just getting in when an idea struck Ferrol which caused him to utter an exclamation of ecstatic relief.

"Why," he cried, "there is that house we passed! Get in quickly. We can reach there in twenty minutes."

Louisiana had her foot upon the step. She stopped short and turned to face him. She changed from red to white and from white to red again, as if with actual terror.

"There!" she exclaimed. "There!"

"Yes," he answered. "We can reach there in time to save ourselves. Is there any objection to our going—in the last extremity?"

For a second they looked into each other's eyes, and then she turned and sprang into the carriage. She laughed aloud.

"Oh, no!" she said. "Go there! It will be a nice place to stay—and the people will amuse you. Go there."

They reached the house in a quarter of an hour instead of twenty minutes. They had

driven fast and kept ahead of the storm, but when they drew up before the picket fence the clouds were black and the thunder was rolling behind them.

It was Louisiana who got out first. She led the way up the path to the house and mounted the steps of the variegated porch. She did not knock at the door, which stood open, but, somewhat to Ferrol's amazement, walked at once into the front room, which was plainly the room of state. Not to put too fine a point upon it, it was a hideous room.

The ceiling was so low that Ferrol felt as if he must knock his head against it; it was papered—ceiling and all—with paper of an unwholesome yellow enlivened with large blue flowers; there was a bedstead in one corner, and the walls were ornamented with colored lithographs of moon-faced houris, with round eyes and round, red cheeks, and wearing low-necked dresses, and flowers in their bosoms, and bright yellow gold necklaces. These works of art were the first things which caught Ferrol's eye, and he went slowly up to the most remarkable, and stood before it, regarding it with mingled wonderment and awe.

He turned from it after a few seconds to look at Louisiana, who stood near him, and he beheld what seemed to him a phenomenon. He had

never seen her blush before as other women blush—now she was blushing, burning red from chin to brow.

"There—there is no one in this part of the house," she said. "I—I know more of these people than you do. I will go and try to find some one."

She was gone before he could interpose. Not that he would have interposed, perhaps. Somehow—without knowing why—he felt as if she did know more of the situation than he did—almost as if she were, in a manner, doing the honors for the time being.

She crossed the passage with a quick, uneven step, and made her way, as if well used to the place, into the kitchen at the back of the house.

A stout negro woman stood at a table, filling a pan with newly made biscuits. Her back was toward the door and she did not see who entered.

"Aunt Cassandry," the girl began, when the woman turned toward her.

"Who's dar?" she exclaimed. "Lor', honey, how ye skeert me! I ain't no C'sandry."

The face she turned was a strange one, and it showed no sign of recognition of her visitor.

It was an odd thing that the sight of her unfamiliar face should have been a shock to Louisiana; but it was a shock. She put her hand to her side.

"Where is my—where is Mr. Rogers?" she asked. "I want to see him."

"Out on de back po'ch, honey, right now. Dar he goes!"

The girl heard him, and flew out to meet him. Her heart was throbbing hard, and she was drawing quick, short breaths.

"Father!" she cried. "Father! Don't go in the house!"

And she caught him by both shoulders and drew him round. He did not know her at first in her fanciful-simple dress and her Gainsborough hat. He was not used to that style of thing, believing that it belonged rather to the world of pictures. He stared at her. Then he broke out with an exclamation.

"Lo-rd! Louisianny!"

She kept her eyes on his face. They were feverishly bright, and her cheeks were hot. She laughed hysterically.

"Don't speak loud," she said. "There are some strange people in the house, and—and I want to tell you something."

He was a slow man, and it took him some time to grasp the fact that she was really before him in the flesh. He said again:

"Lord, Louisianny!" adding cheerfully, "How ye've serprised me!"

Then he took in afresh the change in her

dress. There was a pile of stove-wood stacked on the porch to be ready for use, and he sat down on it to look at her.

"Why, ye've got a new dress on!" he said. "Thet thar's what made ye look sorter curis. I hardly knowed ye."

Then he remembered what she had said on first seeing him.

"Why don't ye want me to go in the house?" he asked. "What sort o' folks air they?"

"They came with me from the Springs," she answered; "and—and I want to—to play a joke on them."

She put her hands up to her burning cheeks, and stood so.

"A joke on 'em?" he repeated.

"Yes," she said, speaking very fast. "They don't know I live here, they think I came from some city—they took the notion themselves—and I want to let them think so until we go away from the house. It will be such a good joke."

She tried to laugh, but broke off in the middle of a harsh sound. Her father, with one copperas-colored leg crossed over the other, was chewing his tobacco slowly, after the manner of a ruminating animal, while he watched her.

"Don't you see?" she asked.

"Wa-al, no," he answered. "Not rightly."

She actually assumed a kind of spectral gayety.

"I never thought of it until I saw it was not Cassandry who was in the kitchen," she said. "The woman who is there didn't know me, and it came into my mind that—that we might play off on them," using the phraseology to which he was the most accustomed.

"Waal, we mought," he admitted, with a speculative deliberateness. "Thet's so. We mought—if thar was any use in it."

"It's only for a joke," she persisted hurriedly.

"Thet's so," he repeated. "Thet's so."

He got up slowly and rather lumberingly from his seat and dusted the chips from his copperas-colored legs.

"Hev ye ben enjyin' yerself, Louisianny?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered. "Never better."

"Ye must hev," he returned, "or ye wouldn't be in sperrits to play jokes."

Then he changed his tone so suddenly that she was startled.

"What do ye want me to do?" he asked.

She put her hand on his shoulder and tried to laugh again.

"To pretend you don't know me—to pretend I have never been here before. That's joke

enough, isn't it? They will think so when I tell them the truth. You slow old father! Why don't you laugh?"

"P'r'aps," he said, "it's on account o' me bein' slow, Louisianny. Mebbe I shall begin arter a while."

"Don't begin at the wrong time," she said, still keeping up her feverish laugh, "or you'll spoil it all. Now come along in and—and pretend you don't know me," she continued, drawing him forward by the arm. "They might suspect something if we stay so long. All you've got to do is to pretend you don't know me."

"Thet's so, Louisianny," with a kindly glance downward at her excited face as he followed her out. "Thar ain't no call fur me to do nothin' else, is there—just pretend I don't know ye?"

It was wonderful how well he did it, too. When she preceded him into the room the girl was quivering with excitement. He might break down, and it would be all over in a second. But she looked Ferrol boldly in the face when she made her first speech.

"This is the gentleman of the house," she said. "I found him on the back porch. He had just come in. He has been kind enough to say we may stay until the storm is over."

"Oh, yes!" said he hospitably, "stay an' welcome. Ye ain't the first as has stopped over.

Storms come up sorter suddent, an' we hain't the kind as turns folks away."

Ferrol thanked him, Olivia joining in with a murmur of gratitude. They were very much indebted to him for his hospitality; they considered themselves very fortunate.

Their host received their protestations with much equanimity.

"If ye'd like to set out on the front porch and watch the storm come up," he said, "thar's seats thar. Or would ye druther set here? Women-folks is gen'rally fond o' settin' in-doors whar thar's a parlor."

But they preferred the porch, and followed him out upon it.

Having seen them seated, he took a chair himself. It was a split-seated chair, painted green, and he tilted it back against a pillar of the porch and applied himself to the full enjoyment of a position more remarkable for ease than elegance. Ferrol regarded him with stealthy rapture, and drank in every word he uttered.

"This," he had exclaimed delightedly to Olivia, in private—"why, this is delightful! These are the people we have read of. I scarcely believed in them before. I would not have missed it for the world!"

"In gin'ral, now," their entertainer proceeded, "wimmin-folk is fonder o' settin' in parlors.

My wife was powerful sot on her parlor. She wasn't never satisfied till she hed one an' hed it fixed up to her notion. She was allers tradin' fur picters fur it. She tuk a heap o' pride in her picters. She allers had it in her mind that her little gal should have a showy parlor when she growed up."

"You have a daughter?" said Ferrol.

Their host hitched his chair a little to one side. He bent forward to expectorate, and then answered with his eyes fixed upon some distant point toward the mountains.

"Wa-al, yes," he said; "but she ain't yere, Louisianny ain't."

Miss Ferrol gave a little start, and immediately made an effort to appear entirely at ease.

"Did you say," asked Ferrol, "that your daughter's name was——"

"Louisianny," promptly. "I come from thar."

Louisiana got up and walked to the opposite end of the porch.

"The storm will be upon us in a few minutes," she said. "It is beginning to rain now. Come and look at this cloud driving over the mountain-top."

Ferrol rose and went to her. He stood for a moment looking at the cloud, but plainly not thinking of it.

"His daughter's name is Louisiana," he said,

in an undertone. "Louisiana! Isn't that delicious?"

Suddenly, even as he spoke, a new idea occurred to him.

"Why," he exclaimed, "your name is Louise, isn't it? I think Olivia said so."

"Yes," she answered, "my name is Louise."

"How should you have liked it," he inquired absent-mindedly, "if it had been Louisiana?"

She answered him with a hard coolness which it startled him afterward to remember.

"How would you have liked it?" she said.

They were driven back just then by the rain, which began to beat in upon their end of the porch. They were obliged to return to Olivia and Mr. Rogers, who were engaged in an animated conversation.

The fact was that, in her momentary excitement, Olivia had plunged into conversation as a refuge. She had suddenly poured forth a stream of remark and query which had the effect of spurring up her companion to a like exhibition of frankness. He had been asking questions, too.

"She's ben tellin' me," he said, as Ferrol approached, "thet you're a littery man, an' write fur the papers—novel-stories, an' pomes an' things. I never seen one before—not as I know on."

"I wonder why not!" remarked Ferrol. "We are plentiful enough."

"Air ye now?" he asked reflectively. "I had an idee thar was only one on ye now an' ag'in—jest now an' ag'in."

He paused there to shake his head.

"I've often wondered how ye could do it," he said. "*I* couldn't. Thar's some as thinks they could if they tried, but I wa'n't never thataway—I wa'n't never thataway. I hain't no idee I could do it, not if I tried ever so. Seems to me," he went on, with the air of making an announcement of so novel a nature that he must present it modestly, "seems to me, now, as if them as does it must hev a kinder gift fur it, now. Lord! I couldn't write a novel. I wouldn't know whar to begin."

"It is difficult to decide where," said Ferrol.

He did not smile at all. His manner was perfect—so full of interest, indeed, that Mr. Rogers quite warmed and expanded under it.

"The scenes on 'em all, now, bein' mostly laid in Bagdad, would be ag'in' me, if nothin' else war," he proceeded.

"Being laid—?" queried Ferrol.

"In Bagdad or—wa-al, furrin parts tharabouts. Ye see I couldn't tell nothin' much about no place but North Ca'liny, an' folks wouldn't buy it."

"But why not?" exclaimed Ferrol.

"Why, Lord bless ye!" he said hilariously, "they'd know it wa'n't true. They'd say in a minnit: 'Why, thar's thet fool Rogers ben a-writin' a pack o' lies thet ain't a word on it true. Thar ain't no cas-tles in Hamilton County, an' thar ain't no folks like these yere. It just ain't so!' I 'lowed thet thar was the reason the novel-writers allers writ about things a-happenin' in Bagdad. Ye kin say most anythin' ye like about Bagdad an' no one cayn't contradict ye."

"I don't seem to remember many novels of—of that particular description," remarked Ferrol, in a rather low voice. "Perhaps my memory——"

"Ye don't?" he queried, in much surprise. "Waal now, jest you notice an' see if it ain't so. I hain't read many novels myself. I hain't read but one——"

"Oh!" interposed Ferrol. "And it was a story of life in Bagdad."

"Yes; an' I've heard tell of others as was the same. Hance Claiborn, now, he was a-tellen me of one."

He checked himself to speak to the negro woman who had presented herself at a room door.

"We're a-comin', Nancy," he said, with an air of good fellowship. "Now, ladies an' gen-

tlemen," he added, rising from his chair, "walk in an' have some supper."

Ferrol and Olivia rose with some hesitation.

"You are very kind," they said. "We did not intend to give you trouble."

"Trouble!" he replied, as if scarcely comprehending. "This yere ain't no trouble. Ye hain't ben in North Ca'liny before, hev ye?" he continued good-naturedly. "We're bound to hev ye eat, if ye stay with us long enough. We wouldn't let ye go 'way without eatin', bless ye. We ain't that kind. Walk straight in."

He led them into a long, low room, half kitchen, half dining-room. It was not so ugly as the room of state, because it was entirely unadorned. Its ceiled walls were painted brown and stained with many a winter's smoke. The pine table was spread with a clean homespun cloth and heaped with well-cooked, appetizing food.

"If ye can put up with country fare, ye'll not find it so bad," said the host. "Nancy prides herself on her way o' doin' things."

There never was more kindly hospitality, Ferrol thought. The simple generosity which made them favored guests at once warmed and touched him. He glanced across at Louisiana to see if she was not as much pleased as he was himself. But the food upon her plate remained almost untouched. There was a strange look

on her face; she was deadly pale and her downcast eyes shone under their lashes. She did not look at their host at all; it struck Ferrol that she avoided looking at him with a strong effort. Her pallor made him anxious.

"You are not well," he said to her. "You do not look well at all."

Their host started and turned toward her.

"Why, no, ye ain't!" he exclaimed quite tremulously. "Lord, no! Ye cayn't be. Ye hain't no color. What—what's the trouble, Lou—Lord! I was gwine to call ye Louisianny, an' —she ain't yere, Louisianny ain't."

He ended with a nervous laugh.

"I'm used to takin' a heap o' care on her," he said. "I've lost ten on 'em, an's she's all that's left me, an'—an' I think a heap on her. I—I wish she was yere. Ye mustn't git sick, ma'am."

The girl got up hurriedly.

"I am not sick, really," she said. "The thunder—I have a little headache. I will go out on to the porch. It's clearing up now. The fresh air will do me good."

The old man rose, too, with rather a flurried manner.

"If Louisianny was yere," he faltered, "she could give ye something to help ye. Camphire now—sperrits of camphire—let me git ye some."

"No—no," said the girl. "No, thank you."

And she slipped out of the door and was gone.

Mr. Rogers sat down again with a sigh.

"I wish she'd let me git her some," he said wistfully. "I know how it is with young critters like that. They're dele-cate," anxiously. "Lord, they're dele-cate. They'd oughter hev their mothers round 'em. I know how it is with Louisianny."

A cloud seemed to settle upon him. He rubbed his grizzled chin with his hand again and again, glancing at the open door as he did it. It was evident that his heart was outside with the girl who was like "Louisianny."

CHAPTER VIII

"Nothing Has Hurt You"

The storm was quite over, and the sun was setting in flames of gold when the meal was ended and they went out on the porch again. Mr. Rogers had scarcely recovered himself, but he had made an effort to do so, and had so far succeeded as to begin to describe the nature of the one novel he had read. Still, he had rubbed his chin and kept his eye uneasily on the door all the time he had been talking.

"It was about a Frenchman," he said seriously, "an' his name was—Frankoyse—F-r-a-n-c-o-i-s, Frankoyse. Thet thar's a French name, ain't it? Me an' Ianthy 'lowed it was common to the country. It don't belong yere, Frankoyse don't, an' it's got a furrin sound."

"It—yes, it is a French name," assented Ferrol.

A few minutes afterward they went out. Louisiana stood at the end of the porch, leaning against a wooden pillar and twisting an arm around it.

"Are ye better?" Mr. Rogers asked. "I am

goin' to 'tend to my stock, an' if ye ain't, mebbe the camphire—sperrits of camphire——"

"I don't need it," she answered. "I am quite well."

So he went away and left them, promising to return shortly and "gear up their critters" for them that they might go on their way.

When he was gone, there was a silence of a few seconds which Ferrol could not exactly account for. Almost for the first time in his manhood, he did not know what to say. Gradually there had settled upon him the conviction that something had gone very wrong indeed, that there was something mysterious and complicated at work, that somehow he himself was involved, and that his position was at once a most singular and delicate one. It was several moments before he could decide that his best plan seemed to be to try to conceal his bewilderment and appear at ease. And, very naturally, the speech he chose to begin with was the most unlucky he could have hit upon.

"He is charming," he said. "What a lovable old fellow! What a delicious old fellow! He has been telling me about the novel. It is the story of a Frenchman, and his name—try to guess his name."

But Louisiana did not try.

"You couldn't guess it," he went on. "It is

better than all the rest. His name was—Frankoyse."

That instant she turned round. She was shaking all over like a leaf.

"Good heavens!" flashed through his mind. "This is a climax! *This* is the real creature!"

"Don't laugh again!" she cried. "Don't dare to laugh! I won't bear it! He is my father!"

For a second or so he had not the breath to speak.

"*Your* father!" he said, when he found his voice. "*Your* father! *Yours!*"

"Yes," she answered, "mine. This is my home. I have lived here all my life—my name is Louisiana. You have laughed at me, too!"

It was the real creature, indeed, whom he saw. She burst into passionate tears.

"Do you think that I kept up this pretence to-day because I was ashamed of him?" she said. "Do you think I did it because I did not love him—and respect him—and think him better than all the rest of the world? It was because I loved him so much that I did it—because I knew so well that you would say to each other that he was not like me—that he was rougher, and that it was a wonder I belonged to him. It is a wonder I belong to him! I am not worthy to kiss his shoes. I have been ashamed—I have been bad enough for that, but not bad enough

to be ashamed of him. I thought at first it would be better to let you believe what you would—that it would soon be over, and we should never see each other again, but I did not think that I should have to sit by and see you laugh because he does not know the world as you do—because he has always lived his simple, good life in one simple, country place."

Ferrol had grown as pale as she was herself. He groaned aloud.

"Oh!" he cried, "what shall I say to you? For heaven's sake try to understand that it is not at him I have laughed, but——"

"He has never been away from home," she broke in. "He has worked too hard to have time to read, and—" she stopped and dropped her hands with a gesture of unutterable pride. "Why should I tell you that?" she said. "It sounds as if I were apologizing for him, and there is no need that I should."

"If I could understand," began Ferrol—"if I could realize——"

"Ask your sister," she replied. "It was her plan. I—I" (with a little sob) "am only her experiment."

Olivia came forward, looking wholly subdued. Her eyes were wet, too.

"It is true," she said. "It is all my fault."

"May I ask you to explain?" said Ferrol

rather sternly. "I suppose some of this has been for my benefit."

"Don't speak in that tone," said Olivia. "It is bad enough as it is. I—I never was so wretched in my life. I never dreamed of its turning out in this way. She was so pretty and gentle and quick to take a hint, and—I wanted to try the experiment—to see if you would guess at the truth. I—I had a theory, and I was so much interested that—I forgot to—to think of her very much. I did not think she would care."

Louisiana broke in.

"Yes," she said, her eyes bright with pain, "she forgot. I was very fond of her, and I knew so very little that she forgot to think of me. I was only a kind of plaything—but I was too proud to remind her. I thought it would be soon over, and I knew how ignorant I was. I was afraid to trust my feelings at first. I thought perhaps—it was vanity, and I ought to crush it down. I was very fond of her."

"Oh!" cried Olivia piteously, "don't say 'was,' Louise!"

"Don't say 'Louise,'" was the reply. "Say 'Louisiana.' I am not ashamed of it now. I want Mr. Ferrol to hear it."

"I have nothing to say in self-defence," Laurence replied hopelessly.

"Ask your sister," she replied. "It was her plan."

"There is nothing for any of us to say but good-by," said Louisiana. "We shall never see each other again. It is all over between us. You will go your way and I shall go mine. I shall stay here to-night. You must drive back to the Springs without me. I ought never to have gone there."

Laurence threw himself into a chair and sat shading his face with his hand. He stared from under it at the shining wet grass and leaves. Even yet he scarcely believed that all this was true. He felt as if he were walking in a dream. The worst of it was this desperate feeling that there was nothing for him to say. There was a long silence, but at last Louisiana left her place and came and stood before him.

"I am going to meet my father," she said. "I persuaded him that I was only playing a joke. He thought it was one of my fancies, and he helped me out because I asked him to do it. I am going to tell him that I have told you the truth. He won't know why I did it. I will make it easy for you. I shall not see you again. Good-by."

Ferrol's misery got the better of him.

"I can't bear this!" he cried, springing up. "I can't, indeed."

She drew back.

"Why not?" she said. "Nothing has hurt *you*."

The simple coldness of her manner was very hard upon him, indeed.

"You think I have no right to complain," he answered, "and yet see how you send me away! You speak as if you did not intend to let me see you again——"

"No," she interposed, "you shall not see me again. Why should you? Ask your sister to tell you how ignorant I am. She knows. Why should you come here? There would always be as much to laugh at as there has been to-day. Go where you need not laugh. This is not the place for you. Good-by!"

Then he knew he need say no more. She spoke with a child's passion and with a woman's proud obstinacy. Then she turned to Olivia. He was thrilled to the heart as he watched her while she did it. Her eyes were full of tears, but she had put both her hands behind her.

"Good-by," she said.

Olivia broke down altogether.

"Is that the way you are going to say good-by?" she cried. "I did not think you were so hard. If I had meant any harm—but I didn't —and you look as if you never would forgive me."

"I may sometime," answered the girl. "I don't yet. I did not think I was so hard, either."

Her hands fell at her sides and she stood trembling a second. All at once she had broken down, too.

"I loved you," she said; "but you did not love me."

And then she turned away and walked slowly into the house.

It was almost half an hour before their host came to them with the news that their carriage was ready.

He looked rather "off color" himself and wore a wearied air, but he was very uncommunicative.

"Louisianny 'lowed she'd go to bed an' sleep off her headache, instead of goin' back to the Springs," he said. "I'll be thar in a day or two to 'tend to her bill an' the rest on it. I 'low the waters hain't done her much good. She ain't at herself rightly. I knowed she wasn't when she was so notionate this evenin'. She ain't notionate when she's at herself."

"We are much indebted to you for your kindness," said Ferrol when he took the reins.

"Oh, thet ain't nothin'! You're welcome. You'd hev hed a better time if Louisianny had been at herself. Good-by to ye. Ye'll hev plenty of moonlight to see ye home."

Their long ride was a silent one. When they

reached the end of it and Olivia had been helped out of the carriage and stood in the moonlight upon the deserted gallery, where she had stood with Louisiana in the morning, she looked very suitably miserable.

"Laurence," she said, "I don't exactly see why you should feel so very severe about it. I am sure I am as abject as any one could wish."

He stood a moment in silence looking absently out on the moonlight-flooded lawn. Everything was still and wore an air of desolation.

"We won't talk about it," he said at last, "but you have done me an ill turn, Olivia."

CHAPTER IX

"Don't Ye, Louisianny?"

As he said it, Louisiana was at home in the house-room, sitting on a low chair at her father's knee and looking into the fire. She had not gone to bed. When he returned to the house her father had found her sitting here, and she had not left her place since. A wood fire had been lighted because the mountain air was cool after the rains, and she seemed to like to sit and watch it and think.

Mr. Rogers himself was in a thoughtful mood. After leaving his departing guests he had settled down with some deliberation. He had closed the doors and brought forward his favorite wooden-backed, split-seated chair. Then he had seated himself, and drawing forth his twist of tobacco had cut off a goodly "chaw." He moved slowly and wore a serious and somewhat abstracted air. Afterward he tilted backward a little, crossed his legs, and proceeded to ruminate.

"Louisianny," he said, "Louisianny, I'd like to hear the rights of it."

She answered him in a low voice.

"It is not worth telling," she said. "It was a very poor joke, after all."

He gave her a quick side glance, rubbing his crossed legs slowly.

"Was it?" he remarked. "A poor one, after all? Why, thet's bad."

The quiet patience of his face was a study. He went on rubbing his leg even more slowly than before.

"Thet's bad," he said again. "Now, what d'ye think was the trouble, Louisianny?"

"I made a mistake," she answered. "That was all."

Suddenly she turned to him and laid her folded arms on his knee and her face upon them, sobbing.

"I oughtn't to have gone," she cried. "I ought to have stayed at home with you, father."

His face flushed, and he was obliged to relieve his feelings by expectorating into the fire.

"Louisianny," he said, "I'd like to ask ye one question. Was thar anybody thar as didn't —well, as didn't show ye respect—as was slighty or free or—or onconsiderate? Fur instants, any littery man—jest for instants, now?"

"No, no!" she answered. "They were very kind to me always."

"Don't be afeared to tell me, Louisianny," he

put it to her. "I only said 'fur instants,' havin' heern as littery men was sometimes—now an' again—thataway—now an' ag'in."

"They were very good to me," she repeated, "always."

"If they was," he returned, "I'm glad of it. I'm a-gittin' old, Louisianny, an' I hain't much health—dispepsy's what tells on a man," he went on deliberately. "But if thar'd a-bin any one as hed done it, I'd hev hed to settle it with him—I'd hev hed to hev settled it with him—liver or no liver."

He put his hand on her head and gave it a slow little rub the wrong way, but tenderly.

"I ain't goin' to ask ye no more questions," he said, "exceptin' one. Is thar anything ye'd like to hev done in the house—in the parlor, for instants, now—s'posin' we was to say in the parlor."

"No, no," she cried. "Let it stay as it is! Let it all stay as it is!"

"Wa-al," he said meditatively, "ye know thar ain't no reason why it should, Louisianny, if ye'd like to hev it fixed up more or different. If ye'd like a new paper—say a floweryer one—or a new set of cheers an' things. Up to Lawyer Hoskin's I seen 'em with red seats to 'em, an' seemed like they did set things off sorter. If ye'd like to hev some, that ain't no reason why ye shouldn't. Things has gone purty well

with me, an'—an' thar ain't none left but you, honey. Lord!" he added, in a queer burst of tenderness. "Why shouldn't ye hev things if ye want 'em?"

"I don't want them," she protested. "I want nothing but you."

For a moment there was a dead silence. He kept his eyes fixed on the fire. He seemed to be turning something over in his mind. But at last he spoke:

"Don't ye, Louisianny?" he said.

"No," she answered. "Nothing."

And she drew his hand under her cheek and kissed it.

He took it very quietly.

"Ye've got a kind heart, Louisianny," he said. "Young folks gin'rally has, I think. It's sorter nat'ral, but, Lord! thar's other things besides us old folks, an' it's nat'ral as ye'd want 'em. Thar's things as kin be altered, an' thar's things as cayn't. Let's alter them as kin. If ye'd like a cupoly put on the house, or, say a coat of yaller-buff paint—Sawyer's new house is yaller buff, an' it's mighty showy; or a organ or a pianny, or more dressin', ye shall have 'em. Them's things as it ain't too late to set right, an' ye shall hev 'em."

But she only cried the more in a soft, hushed way.

"Oh, don't be so good to me!" she said. "Don't be so good and kind."

He went on as quietly as before.

"If—fur instants—it was me as was to be altered, Louisianny, I'm afeared—I'm afeared we couldn't do it. I'm afeared as I've been let run too long—jest to put it that way. We mought hev done it if we'd hev begun airlier—say forty or fifty year back—but I'm afeared we couldn't do it now. Not as I wouldn't be willin'—I wouldn't hev a thing ag'in' it, an' I'd try my best—but it's late. Thar's whar it is. If it was me as hed to be altered—made more moderner, an' to know more, an' to hev more style—I'm afeared thar'd be a heap o' trouble. Style didn't never seem to come nat'ral to me, somehow. I'm one o' them things as cayn't be altered. Let's alter them as kin."

"I don't want you altered," she protested. "Oh! why should I, when you are such a good father—such a dear father!"

And there was a little silence again, and at the end of it he said, in a gentle, forbearing voice, just as he had said before:

"Don't ye, Louisianny?"

They sat silent again for some time afterward—indeed, but little more was said until they separated for the night. Then, when she kissed him and clung for a moment round his neck, he

suddenly roused himself from his prolonged revery.

"Lord!" he said quite cheerfully, "it cayn't last long, at the longest, arter all—an' you're young yet, you're young."

"What can't last long?" she asked, timidly.

He looked into her eyes and smiled.

"Nothin'," he answered, "nothin' cayn't. Nothin' don't—an' you're young."

And he was so far moved by his secret thought that he smoothed her hair from her forehead the wrong way again with a light touch, before he let her go.

CHAPTER X

The Great World

THE next morning he went to the Springs.

"I'll go an' settle up and bring ye your trunk an' things," he said. "Mebbe I mayn't git back till to-morrer, so don't ye be oneasy. Ef I feel tired when I git thar, I'll stay overnight."

She did not think it likely he would stay. She had never known him to remain away from home during a night unless he had been compelled to do so by business. He had always been too childishly fond of his home to be happy away from it. He liked the routine he had been used to through forty years: the rising at daylight, the regular common duties he assumed as his share, his own seat on the hearth or porch and at table.

"Folks may be clever enough," he used to say. "They air clever, as a rule—but it don't come nat'ral to be away. Thar ain't nothin' like home an' home ways."

But he did not return that night, or even the next morning. It was dusk the next evening

before Louisiana heard the buggy wheels on the road.

She had been sitting on the porch and rose to greet him when he drove up and descended from his conveyance rather stiffly.

"Ye wasn't oneasy, was ye?" he asked.

"No," she answered; "only it seemed strange to know you were away."

"I hain't done it but three times since me an' Ianthy was married," he said. "Two o' them times was Conference to Barnsville, an' one was when Marcelly died."

When he mounted the porch steps he looked up at her with a smile on his weather-beaten face.

"Was ye lonesome?" he asked. "I bet ye was."

"A little," she replied. "Not very."

She gave him his chair against the wooden pillar, and watched him as he tilted back and balanced himself on its back legs. She saw something new and disturbed in his face and manner. It was as if the bit of outside life he had seen had left temporary traces upon him. She wondered very much how it had impressed him and what he was thinking about.

And after a short time he told her.

"Ye must be lonesome," he said, "arter stayin' down thar. It's nat'ral. A body don't

know until they see it theirselves. It's gay thar. Lord, yes! it's gay, an' what suits young folks is to be gay."

"Some of the people who were there did not think it was gay," Louisiana said a little listlessly. "They were used to gayer places and they often called it dull, but it seemed very gay to me."

"I shouldn't want it no gayer, myself," he returned seriously. "Not if I was young folks. Thar must hev bin three hundred on 'em in thet thar dinin'-room. The names o' the vittles writ down on paper to pick an' choose from, an' fifty or sixty waiters flyin' round. An' the dressin'! I sot an' watched 'em as they come in. I sot an' watched 'em all day. Thar was a heap o' cur'osities in the way of dressin' I never seen before. I went into the dancin'-room at night, too, an' sot thar a spell an' watched 'em. They played a play. Some on 'em put little caps an' aperns on, an' rosettes an' fixin's. They sorter danced in it, an' they hed music while they was doin' it. It was purty, too, if a body could hev follered it out."

"It is a dance they call the German," said Louisiana, remembering with a pang the first night she had seen it, as she sat at her new friend's side.

"German, is it?" he said, with evident satis-

faction at making the discovery. "Waal now, I ain't surprised. It hed a kinder Dutch look to me—kinder Dutch an' furrin."

Just then Nancy announced that his supper was ready, and he went in, but on the threshold he stopped and spoke again:

"Them folks as was here," he said, "they'd gone. They started the next mornin' arter they was here. They live up North somewhars, an' they've went thar."

After he had gone in, Louisiana sat still for a little while. The moon was rising and she watched it until it climbed above the tree-tops and shone bright and clear. Then one desperate little sob broke from her—only one, for she choked the next in its birth, and got up and turned toward the house and the room in which the kerosense lamp burned on the supper table.

"I'll go an' talk to him," she said. "He likes to have me with him, and it will be better than sitting here."

She went in and sat near him, resting her elbows upon the table and her chin on her hands, and tried to begin to talk. But it was not very easy. She found that she had a tendency to fall back in long silent pauses, in which she simply looked at him with sad, tender eyes.

"I stopped at Casey's as I came on," he said at last. "Thet thar was one thing as made me late. Thar's—thar's somethin' I hed on my mind fur him to do fur me."

"For Casey to do?" she said.

He poured his coffee into his saucer and answered with a heavy effort at speaking unconcernedly.

"I'm agoin' to hev him fix the house," he said.

She was going to ask him what he meant to have done, but he did not give her time.

"Ianthy an' me," he said, "we'd useder say we'd do it sometime, an' I'm agoin' to do it now. The rooms, now, they're low—whar they're not to say small, they're low an'—an' old-timey. Thar ain't no style to 'em. Them rooms to the Springs, now, they've got style to 'em. An' rooms kin be altered easy enough."

He drank his coffee slowly, set his saucer down and went on with the same serious air of having broached an ordinary subject.

"Goin' to the Springs has sorter started me off," he said. "Seein' things diff'rent does start a man off. Casey an' his men'll be here Monday."

"It seems so—sudden," Louisiana said. She gave a slow, wondering glance at the old smoke-stained room. "I can hardly fancy it looking

any other way than this. It won't be the same place at all."

He glanced around, too, with a start. His glance was hurried and nervous.

"Why, no," he said, "it won't, but—it'll be stylisher. It'll be kinder onfamil'ar at first, but I dessay we shall get used to it—an' it'll be stylisher. An' style—whar thar's young folks, thet's what's wanted—style."

She was so puzzled by his manner that she sat regarding him with wonder. But he went on talking steadily about his plans until the meal was over. He talked of them when they went back to the porch together and sat in the moonlight. He scarcely gave her an opportunity to speak. Once or twice the idea vaguely occurred to her that for some reason he did not want her to talk. It was a relief to her only to be called upon to listen, but still she was puzzled.

"When we git fixed up," he said, "ye kin hev your friends yere. Thar's them folks, now, as was yere the other day from the Springs—when we're fixed up ye mought invite 'em—next summer, fur instants. Like as not I shall be away myself an'—ye'd hev room a-plenty. Ye wouldn't need me, ye see. An', Lord! how it'd serprise 'em to come an' find ye all fixed."

"I should never ask them," she cried impetuously. "And—they wouldn't come if I did."

"Mebbe they would," he responded gravely, "if ye was fixed up."

"I don't want them," she said passionately. "Let them keep their place. I don't want them."

"Don't ye," he said, in his quiet voice. "Don't ye, Louisianny?"

And he seemed to sink into a revery and did not speak again for quite a long time.

CHAPTER XI

A Rusty Nail

On Monday Casey and his men came. Louisiana and her father were at breakfast when they struck their first blow at the end of the house which was to be renovated first.

The old man, hearing it, started violently—so violently that he almost upset the coffee at his elbow.

He laughed a tremulous sort of laugh.

"Why, I'm narvous!" he said. "Now, jest to think o' me a-bein' narvous!"

"I suppose," said Louisiana, "I am nervous as well. It made me start, too. It had such a strange sound."

"Waal, now," he answered, "come to think on it, it hed—sorter. Seems like it wasn't sca'cely nat'ral. P'r'aps that's it."

Neither of them ate much breakfast, and when the meal was over they went out together to look at the workmen. They were very busy tearing off weather-boarding and wrenching out nails. Louisiana watched them with regretful

eyes. In secret she was wishing that the low ceilings and painted walls might remain as they were. She had known them so long.

"I am afraid he is doing it to please me," she thought. "He does not believe me when I say I don't want it altered. He would never have had it done for himself."

Her father had seated himself on a pile of plank. He was rubbing his crossed leg as usual, but his hand trembled slightly.

"I druv them nails in myself," he said. "Ianthy wasn't but nineteen. She'd set yere an' watch me. It was two or three months arter we was married. She was mighty proud on it when it was all done. Little Tom he was born in thet thar room. The rest on 'em was born in the front room, 'n' they all died thar. Ianthy she died thar. I'd useder think I should——"

He stopped and glanced suddenly at Louisiana. He pulled himself up and smiled.

"Ye ain't in the notion o' hevin' the cupoly," he said. "We kin hev it as soon as not—'n' seems ter me thar's a heap o' style to 'em."

"Anything that pleases you will please me, father," she said.

He gave her a mild, cheerful look.

"Ye don't take much int'russ in it yet, do ye?" he said. "But ye will when it gits along

kinder. Lord! ye'll be as impatient as Ianthy an' me was, when it gits along."

She tried to think she would, but without very much success. She lingered about for a while, and at last went to her own room at the other end of the house and shut herself in.

Her trunk had been carried up-stairs and set in its old place behind the door. She opened it and began to drag out the dresses and other adornments she had taken with her to the Springs. There was the blue muslin. She threw it on the floor and dropped beside it, half sitting, half kneeling. She laughed quite savagely.

"I thought it was very nice when I made it," she said. "I wonder how *she* would like to wear it?" She pulled out one thing after another until the floor around her was strewn. Then she got up and left them, and ran to the bed and threw herself into a chair beside it, hiding her face in the pillow.

"Oh, how dull it is, and how lonely!" she said. "What shall I do? What shall I do?"

And while she sobbed she heard the blows upon the boards below.

Before she went down-stairs she replaced the things she had taken from the trunk. She packed them away neatly, and, having done it, turned the key upon them.

"Father," she said, at dinner, "there are some things up-stairs I want to send to Cousin Jenny. I have done with them, and I think she'd like to have them."

"Dresses an' things, Louisianny?" he said.

"Yes," she answered. "I shall not need them any more. I—don't care for them."

"Don't—" he began, but stopped short, and, lifting his glass, swallowed the rest of the sentence in a large glass of milk.

"I'll tell Leander to send fer it," he said afterward. "Jenny'll be real sot up, I reckon. Her pappy bein' so onfort'nit, she don't git much."

He ate scarcely more dinner than breakfast, and spent the afternoon in wandering here and there among the workmen. Sometimes he talked to them, and sometimes sat on his pile of plank and watched them in silence. Once, when no one was looking, he stooped down and picked up a rusty nail which had fallen from its place in a piece of board. After holding it in his hand for a little he furtively thrust it into his pocket, and seemed to experience a sense of relief after he had done it.

"Ye don't do nothin' toward helpin' us, Uncle Elbert," said one of the young men. (Every youngster within ten miles knew him as "Uncle Elbert.") "Ye ain't as smart as ye was when last ye built, air ye?"

"No, boys," he answered, "I ain't. Thet's so, I ain't as smart, an'," he added rather hurriedly, "it'd sorter go again' me to holp ye at what ye're doin' now. Not as I don't think it's time it was done, but—it'd sorter go ag'in' me."

When Louisiana entered the house-room at dusk, she found him sitting by the fire, his body drooping forward, his head resting listlessly on his hand.

"I've got a touch o' dyspepsy, Louisianny," he said, "an' the knockin' hes kinder giv me a headache. I'll go to bed airly."

CHAPTER XII

"Mebbe"

She had been so full of her own sharp pain and humiliation during the first few days that perhaps she had not been so quick to see as she would otherwise have been, but the time soon came when she awakened to a bewildered sense of new and strange trouble. She scarcely knew when it was that she first began to fancy that some change had taken place in her father. It was a change she could not comprehend when she recognized its presence. It was no alteration of his old, slow, quiet faithfulness to her. He had never been so faithfully tender. The first thing which awakened her thought of change was his redoubled tenderness. She found that he watched her constantly, in a patient, anxious way. When they were together she often discovered that he kept his eyes fixed upon her when he thought she was not aware of his gaze. He seemed reluctant to leave her alone, and continually managed to be near her, and yet it grew upon her at last that the old, homely good fellowship between them had some-

how been broken in upon, and existed no longer. It was not that he loved her any less—she was sure of that; but she had lost something, without knowing when or how she had lost it, or even exactly what it was. But his anxiety to please her grew day by day. He hurried the men who were at work upon the house.

"Louisianny, she'll enjoy it when it's done," he said to them. "Hurry up, boys, an' do yer plum best."

She had been at home about two weeks when he began to drive over to the nearest depot every day at "train time." It was about three miles distant, and he went over for several days in his spring wagon. At first he said nothing of his reason for making the journey, but one morning, as he stood at his horses' heads, he said to Louisiana, without turning to look at her, and affecting to be very busy with some portion of the harness:

"I've ben expectin' of some things fer a day or so, an' they hain't come. I wasn't sure when I oughter to look fer 'em—mebbe I've ben lookin' too soon—fer they hain't come yet."

"Where were they to come from?" she asked.

"From—from New York City."

"From New York?" she echoed, trying to show an interest. "I did not know you sent there, father."

"I hain't never done it afore," he answered. "These yere things—mebbe they'll come to-day, an' then ye'll see 'em."

She asked no further questions, fancying that he had been buying some adornments for the new rooms which were to be a surprise for her. After he had gone away she thought a little sadly of his kindness to her, and her unworthiness of it. At noon he came back and brought his prize with him.

He drove up slowly with it behind him in the wagon—a large, shining, new trunk—quite as big and ponderous as any she had seen at the Springs.

He got down and came up to her as she stood on the porch. He put his hand on her shoulder.

"I'll hev 'em took in an' ye kin look at 'em," he said. "It's some new things ye was a-needin'."

She began to guess dimly at what he meant, but she followed the trunk into the house without speaking. When they set it down she stood near while her father fumbled for the key and found it, turned it in the lock, and threw back the lid.

"They're some things ye was a-needin'," he said. "I hope ye'll like 'em, honey."

She did not know what it was in his voice, or his face, or his simple manner that moved

her so, but she did not look at what he had brought at all—she ran to him and caught his arm, dropped her face on it, and burst into tears.

"Father—father!" she cried. "Oh, father!"

"Look at 'em, Louisianny," he persisted gently, "an' see if they suit ye. Thar ain't no reason to cry, honey."

The words checked her and made her feel uncertain and bewildered again. She stopped crying and looked up at him, wondering if her emotion troubled him, but he did not meet her eye, and only seemed anxious that she should see what he had brought.

"I didn't tell ye all I hed in my mind when I went to the Springs," he said. "I hed a notion I'd like to see fer myself how things was. I knowed ye'd hev an idee thet ye couldn't ask me fer the kind o' things ye wanted, an' I knowed *I* knowed nothin' about what they was, so I ses to myself: 'I'll go an' stay a day an' watch and find out.' An' I went, an' I found out. Thar was a young woman thar as was dressed purtier than any of 'em. An' she was clever an' friendly, an' I managed it so we got a-talkin'. She hed on a dress that took my fancy. It was mighty black an' thick—ye know it was cold after the rains—an' when we was talkin' I asked her if she mind a-tellin' me

the name of it an' whar she'd bought it. An' she laughed some, an' said it was velvet, an' she'd got it to some store in New York City. An' I asked her if she'd write it down; I'd a little gal at home I wanted a dress off'n it fer—an' then, someways, we warmed up, an' I ses to her: 'She ain't like me. If ye could see her ye'd never guess we was kin.' She hadn't never seen ye. She come the night ye left, but when I told her more about ye, she ses: 'I think I've heern on her. I heern she was very pretty.' An' I told her what I'd hed in my mind, an' it seemed like it took her fancy, an' she told me to get a paper an' pencil an' she'd tell me what to send fer an' whar to send. An' I sent fer 'em, an' thar they air."

She could not tell him that they were things not fit for her to wear. She looked at the rolls of silk and the laces and feminine extras with a bewildered feeling.

"They are beautiful things," she said. "I never thought of having such things for my own."

"Thar's no reason why ye shouldn't hev 'em," he said. "I'd oughter hev thought of 'em afore. Do they suit ye, Louisianny?"

"I should be very hard to please if they didn't," she answered. "They are only too beautiful for—a girl like me."

"They cayn't be that," he said gravely. "I didn't see none no handsomer than you to the Springs, Louisianny, an' I ses to the lady as writ it all down fer me, I ses: 'What I want is fer her to hev what the best on 'em hev. I don't want nothin' no less than what she'd like to hev if she'd ben raised in New York or Philadelphy City. Thar ain't no reason why she shouldn't hev it. Out of eleven she's all that's left, an' she desarves it all. She's young an' handsome, and she desarves it all.'"

"What did she say to that?" Louisiana asked.

He hesitated a moment before answering.

"She looked at me kinder queer fer a minnit," he replied at length. "An' then she ses, 'She'd oughter be a very happy gal,' ses she, 'with such a father,' an' I ses, 'I 'low she is—mebbe.'"

"Only maybe?" said the girl, "only maybe, father?"

She dropped the roll of silk she had been holding and went to him. She put her hand on his arm again and shook it a little, laughing in the same feverish fashion as when she had gone out to him on the porch on the day of her return. She had suddenly flushed up, and her eyes shone as he had seen them then.

"Only maybe," she said. "Why should I be unhappy? There's no reason. Look at me,

with my fine house and my new things! There isn't any one happier in the world! There is nothing left for me to wish for. I have got too much!"

A new mood seemed to have taken possession of her all at once. She scarcely gave him a chance to speak. She drew him to the trunk's side, and made him stand near while she took the things out one by one. She exclaimed and laughed over them as she drew them forth. She held the dress materials up to her waist and neck to see how the colors became her; she tried on laces and sacques and furbelows and the hats which were said to have come from Paris.

"What will they say when they see me at meeting in them?" she said. "Brother Horner will forget his sermons. There never were such things in Bowersville before. I am almost afraid they will think I am putting on airs."

When she reached a box of long kid gloves at the bottom, she burst into such a shrill laugh that her father was startled. There was a tone of false exhilaration about her which was not what he had expected.

"See!" she cried, holding one of the longest pairs up, "eighteen buttons! And cream color! I can wear them with the cream-colored silk and cashmere at—at a festival!"

When she had looked at everything, the rag carpet was strewn with her riches—with fashionable dress materials, with rich and delicate colors, with a hundred feminine and pretty whims.

"How could I help but be happy?" she said. "I am like a queen. I don't suppose queens have very much more, though we don't know much about queens, do we?"

She hung round her father's neck and kissed him in a fervent, excited way.

"You good old father!" she said, "you sweet old father!"

He took one of her soft, supple hands and held it between both his brown and horny ones.

"Louisianny," he said, "I *'low* to make ye happy; ef the Lord hain't nothin' ag'in' it, I *'low* to do it!"

He went out after that, and left her alone to set her things to rights; but when he had gone and closed the door, she did not touch them. She threw herself down flat upon the floor in the midst of them, her slender arms flung out, her eyes wide open and wild and dry.

CHAPTER XIII

A New Plan

At last the day came when the house was finished and stood big and freshly painted and bare in the sun. Late one afternoon in the Indian summer, Casey and his men, having bestowed their last touches, collected their belongings and went away, leaving it a lasting monument to their ability. Inside, instead of the low ceilings and painted wooden walls, there were high rooms and plaster and modern papering; outside, instead of the variegated piazza, was a substantial portico. The whole had been painted a warm gray, and Casey considered his job a neat one and was proud of it. When they were all gone Louisiana went out into the front yard to look at it. She stood in the grass and leaned against an apple-tree. It was near sunset, and both trees and grass were touched with a yellow glow so deep and mellow that it was almost a golden haze. Now that the long-continued hammering and sawing was at an end and all traces of its ac-

companiments removed, the stillness seemed intense. There was not a breath of wind stirring, or the piping of a bird to be heard. The girl clasped her slender arms about the tree's trunk and rested her cheek against the rough bark. She looked up piteously.

"I must try to get used to it," she said. "It is very much nicer—and I must try to get used to it."

But the strangeness of it was very hard on her at first. When she looked at it she had a startled feeling—as if when she had expected to see an old friend she had found herself suddenly face to face with a stranger.

Her father had gone to Bowersville early in the day, and she had been expecting his return for an hour or so. She left her place by the tree at length and went to the fence to watch for his coming down the road. But she waited in vain so long that she got tired again and wandered back to the house and around to the back to where a new barn and stable had been built, painted, and ornamented in accordance with the most novel designs. There was no other such barn or stable in the country, and their fame was already wide-spread and of an enviable nature.

As she approached these buildings Louisiana glanced up and uttered an exclamation. Her

father was sitting upon the door-sill of the barn, and his horse was turned loose to graze upon the grass before him.

"Father," the girl cried, "I have been waiting for you. I thought you had not come."

"I've been yere a right smart while, Louisianny," he answered. "Ye wasn't 'round when I come, an' so ye didn't see me, I reckon."

He was pale, and spoke at first heavily and as if with an effort, but almost instantly he brightened.

"I've jest ben a-settin' yere a-steddyin'," he said. "A man wants to see it a few times an' take it sorter gradual afore he kin do it jestice. A-lookin' at it from yere, now," with a wide sweep of his hand toward the improvements, "ye kin see how much style thar is to it. Seems to me thet the—the mountains now, they look better. It—waal, it kinder sets 'em off—it kinder sets 'em off."

"It is very much prettier," she answered.

"Lord, yes! Thar ain't no comparison. I was jest a-settin' thinkin' thet any one thet'd seed it as it was afore they'd not know it. Ianthy, fer instants—Ianthy *she* wouldn't sca'cely know it was home—thar's so much style to it."

He suddenly stopped and rested against the door-lintel. He was pale again, though he kept up a stout air of good cheer.

"Lord!" he said, after a little pause, "it's a heap stylisher!"

Presently he bent down and picked up a twig which lay on the ground at his feet. He began to strip the leaves from it with careful slowness, and he kept his eyes fixed on it as he went on talking.

"Ye'll never guess who I've ben a-talkin' to to-day, an' what I've ben talkin' to 'em about."

She put her hand on his knee caressingly.

"Tell me, father," she said.

He laughed a jerky, high-pitched laugh.

"I've ben talkin' to Jedge Powers," he said. "He's up yere from Howelsville, a-runnin' fer senator. He's sot his mind on makin' it, too, an' he was a-tellin' me what his principles was. He—he's got a heap o' principles. An' he told me his wife an' family was a-goin' to Europe. He was mighty sosherble—an' he said they was a-goin' to Europe."

He had stripped the last leaf from the twig and had begun upon the bark. Just at this juncture it slipped from his hand and fell on the ground. He bent down again to pick it up.

"Louisianny," he said, "how—would ye like to go to Europe?"

She started back amazed, but she could not catch even a glimpse of his face, he was so busy with the twig.

"I go to Europe—I!" she said. "I don't—I never thought of it. It is not people like us who go to Europe, father."

"Lousianny," he said hurriedly, "what's ag'in' it? Thar ain't nothin'—nothin'! It come in my mind when Powers was a-tellin' me. I ses to myself: 'Why, here's the very thing fer Louisianny! Travel an' furrin langwidges an' new ways o' doin'. It's what she'd oughter hed long ago.' An' Powers he went on a-talkin' right while I was a-steddyin', an' he ses: 'Whar's that pretty darter o' yourn thet we was so took with when we passed through Hamilton last summer? Why,' ses he—he ses it hisself, Louisianny—'why don't ye send her to Europe? Let her go with my wife. She'll take care of her.' An' I stopped him right thar. 'Do ye mean it, Jedge?' I ses. 'Yes,' ses he. 'Why not? My wife an' daughter hev talked about her many a time, an' said how they'd like to see her ag'in. Send her,' ses he. 'You're a rich man, an' ye kin afford it, Squire, if ye will.' An' I ses, 'So I kin ef she'd like to go, an' what's more, I'm a-goin' to ask her ef she would—fer thar ain't nothin' ag'in' it—nothin'.'"

He paused for a moment and turned to look at her.

"Thet's what I was steddyin' about mostly,

Louisianny," he said, "when I set yere afore ye come."

She had been sitting beside him, and she sprang to her feet and stood before him.

"Father," she cried, "are you tired of me?"

"Tired of ye, Louisianny?" he repeated. "Tired of ye?"

She flung out her hand with a wild gesture and burst into tears.

"Are you tired of me?" she said again. "Don't you love me any more? Don't you want me as you used to? Could you do without me for months and months and know I was far away and couldn't come to you? No, you couldn't. You couldn't. I know that, though something—I don't know what—has come between us, and I feel it every minute, and most when you are kindest. Is there nothing in the way of my going away—nothing? Think again."

"Louisianny," he answered, "I cayn't think of nothin'—thet's partic'lar."

She slipped down on her knee and threw herself on his breast, clinging to him with all her young strength.

"Are *you* nothing?" she cried. "Is all your love nothing? Are all your beautiful, good thoughts for my happiness 'nothing'? Is your loneliness nothing? Shall I leave you here to live by yourself in the new home which is

strange to you—after you have given up the old one you knew and loved for me? Oh! what has made you think I have no heart, and no soul, and nothing to be grateful with? Have I ever been bad and cruel and hard to you that you can think it?"

She poured forth her love and grief and tender reproach on his breast with such innocent fervor that he could scarcely bear it. His eyes were wet too, and his furrowed, sunburnt cheeks, and his breath came short and fast while he held her close in his arms.

"Honey," he said, just as he had often spoken to her when she had been a little child, "Louisianny, honey, no! No, never! I never hed a thought ag'in' ye, not in my bottermost heart. Did ye think it? Lord, no! Thar ain't nothin' ye've never done in yer life that was meant to hurt or go ag'in' me. Ye never did go ag'in' me. Ye ain't like me, honey; ye're kinder finer. Ye was borned so. I seed it when ye was in yer cradle. I've said it to Ianthy (an' sence yere growed up I've said it more). Thar's things ye'd oughter hev thet's diff'rent from what most of us wants—it's through you a-bein' so much finer. Ye mustn't be so tender-hearted, honey, ye mustn't."

She clung more closely to him and cried afresh, though more softly.

"Nothing shall take me away from you," she said, "ever again. I went away once, and it would have been better if I had stayed at home. The people did not want me. They meant to be good to me, and they liked me, but—they hurt me without knowing it, and it would have been better if I had stayed here. *You* don't make me feel ashamed, and sad, and bitter. *You* love me just as I am, and you would love me if I knew even less, and was more simple. Let me stay with you! Let us stay together always—always—always!"

He let her cry her fill, holding her pretty head tenderly and soothing her as best he could. Somehow he looked a little brighter himself, and not quite so pale as he had done when she found him sitting alone trying to do the new house "jestice."

When at length they went in to supper it was almost dusk, and he had his arm still around her. He did not let her go until they sat down at the table, and then she brought her chair quite close to his, and while he ate looked at him often with her soft, wet eyes.

CHAPTER XIV

Confessions

THEY had a long, quiet evening together afterward. They sat before the fire, and Louisiana drew her low seat near him so that she could rest her head upon his knee.

"It's almost like old times," she said. "Let us pretend I never went away and that everything is as it used to be."

"Would ye like it to be thataway, Louisianny?" he asked.

She was going to say "Yes," but she remembered the changes he had made to please her, and she turned her face and kissed the hand her cheek rested against.

"You mustn't fancy I don't think the new house is beautiful," she said. "It isn't that I mean. What I would like to bring back is—is the feeling I used to have. That is all—nothing but the old feeling. And people can't always have the same feelings, can they? Things change so as we get older."

He looked at the crackling fire very hard for a minute.

"Thet's so," he said. "Thet's so. Things changes in gin'ral, an' feelin's, now, they're cur'us. Thar's things as kin be altered an' things as cayn't—an' feelin's they cayn't. They're cur'us. Ef ye hurt 'em, now, thar's money; it ain't nowhar—it don't do no good. Thar ain't nothin' ye kin buy as 'll set 'em straight. Ef—fer instants—money could buy back them feelin's of yourn—them as ye'd like to hev back—how ready an' willin' I'd be to trade fer 'em! Lord! how ready an' willin'! But it won't do it. Thar's whar it is. When they're gone a body hez to l'arn to git along without 'em."

And they sat silent again for some time, listening to the snapping of the dry wood burning in the great fireplace.

When they spoke next it was of a different subject.

"Ef ye ain't a-goin' to Europe—" the old man began.

"And I'm not, father," Louisiana put in.

"Ef ye ain't, we must set to work fixin' up right away. This mornin' I was a-layin' out to myself to let it stay tell ye come back an' then hev it all ready fer ye—cheers an' tables—an' sophias—an' merrors—an'—ile paintin's. I laid out to do it slow, Louisianny, and take time, an' steddy a heap, an' to take advice from them es

knows, afore I traded ary time. I 'lowed it'd be a heap better to take advice from them es knowed. Brown, es owns the Springs, I 'lowed to hev asked him, now—he's used to furnishin' up an' knows whar to trade an' what to trade fer. The paintin's, now—I've heern it takes a heap o' experience to pick 'em, an' I ain't hed no experience. I 'low I shouldn't know a good un when I seen it. Now, them picters as was in the parlor—ye know more than I do, I dessay—now, them picters," he said, a little uncertainly, "was they to say good, or—or only about middlin'?"

She hesitated a second.

"Mother was fond of them," she broke out, in a burst of simple feeling.

Remembering how she had stood before the simpering, red-cheeked faces and hated them; how she had burned with shame before them, she was stricken with a bitter pang of remorse.

"Mother was fond of them," she said.

"Thet's so," he answered simply. "Thet's so, she was; an' you a-bein' so soft-hearted an' tender makes it sorter go ag'in' ye to give in as they wasn't—what she took 'em fer. But ye see, thet—though it's nat'ral—it's nat'ral—don't make 'em good or bad, Louisianny, an' Lord! it don't harm *her*. 'Tain't what folks knows or what they don't know thet makes the

good in 'em. Ianthy she warn't to say 'complished, but I don't see how she could hev ben no better than she was—nor more calc'lated to wear well—in the p'int o' religion. Not hevin' experience in ile paintin's ain't what'd hurt her, nor make us think no less of her. It wouldn't hev hurt her when she was livin', an' Lord! she's past it now—she's past it, Ianthy is."

He talked a good deal about his plans and of the things he meant to buy. He was quite eager in his questioning of her and showed such lavishness as went to her heart.

"I want to leave ye well fixed," he said.

"Leave me?" she echoed.

He made a hurried effort to soften the words.

"I'd oughtn't to said it," he said. "It was kinder keerless. Thet thar—it's a long way off—mebbe—an' I'd oughtn't to hev said it. It's a way old folks hev—but it's a bad way. Things git to seem sorter near to 'em—an' ordinary."

The whole day had been to Louisiana a slow approach to a climax. Sometimes when her father talked she could scarcely bear to look at his face as the firelight shone on it.

So, when she had bidden him good-night at last and walked to the door leaving him standing upon the hearth watching her as she moved away, she turned round suddenly and faced him again, with her hand upon the latch.

"Father," she cried, "I want to tell you—I want to tell you——"

"What?" he said. "What, Louisianny?"

She put her hand to her side and leaned against the door—a slender, piteous figure.

"Don't look at me kindly," she said. "I don't deserve it. I deserve nothing. I have been ashamed——"

He stopped her, putting up his shaking hand and turning pale.

"Don't say nothin' as ye'll be sorry fer when ye feel better, Louisianny," he said. "Don't git carried away by yer feelin's into sayin' nothin' es is hard on yerself. Don't ye do it, Louisianny. Thar ain't no need fer it, honey. Yer kinder wrought up now, an' ye cayn't do yerself jestice."

But she would not be restrained.

"I *must* tell you," she said. "It has been on my heart too long. I ought never to have gone away. Everybody was different from us—and had new ways. I think they laughed at me, and it made me bad. I began to ponder over t[illegible]s until at last I hated myself and everything, and was ashamed that I had been content. When I told you I wanted to play a joke on the people who came here, it was not true. I wanted them to go away without knowing that this was my home. It was only a

queer place, to be laughed at, to them, and I was ashamed of it, and bitter and angry. When they went into the parlor they laughed at it and at the pictures, and everything in it, and I stood by with my cheeks burning. When I saw a strange woman in the kitchen it flashed into my mind that I had no need to tell them that all these things that they laughed at had been round me all my life. They were not sneering at them—it was worse than that—they were only interested and amused and curious, and were not afraid to let me see. The—gentleman had been led by his sister to think I came from some city. He thought I was —was pretty and educated—his equal, and I knew how amazed he would be and how he would say he could not believe that I had lived here, and wonder at me and talk me over. And I could not bear it. I only wanted him to go away without knowing, and never, never see me again!"

Remembering the pain and fever and humiliation of the past, and of that dreadful day above all, she burst into sobbing.

"You did not think I was that bad, did you?" she said. "But I was! I was!"

"Louisianny," he said huskily, "come yere. Thar ain't no need fer ye to blame yerself thataway. Yer kinder wrought up."

"Don't be kind to me!" she said. "Don't! I want to tell you all—every word! I was so bad and proud and angry that I meant to carry it out to the end, and tried to—only I was not quite bad enough for one thing, father—I was not bad enough to be ashamed of *you*, or to bear to sit by and see them cast a slight upon you. They didn't mean it for a slight—it was only their clever way of looking at things—but *I* loved you. You were all I had left, and I knew you were better than they were a thousand times! Did they think I would give your warm, good heart—your kind, faithful heart—for all they had learned, or for all they could ever learn? It killed me to see and hear them! And it seemed as if I was on fire. And I told them the truth—that you were *my* father and that I loved you and was proud of you—that I might be ashamed of myself and all the rest, but not of you—never of you—for I wasn't worthy to kiss your feet!"

For one moment her father watched her, his lips parted and trembling. It seemed as if he meant to try to speak, but could not. Then his eyes fell with an humble, bewildered, questioning glance upon his feet, encased in their large, substantial brogans—the feet she had said she was not worthy to kiss. What he saw in them to touch him so it would be hard to tell—for

he broke down utterly, put out his hand, groping to feel for his chair, fell into it with head bowed on his arm, and burst into sobbing too.

She left her self-imposed exile in an instant, ran to him, and knelt down to lean against him.

"Oh!" she cried, "have I broken your heart? Have I broken your heart? Will God ever forgive me? I don't ask you to forgive me, father, for I don't deserve it."

At first he could not speak, but he put his arm round her and drew her head up to his breast—and, with all the love and tenderness he had lavished upon her all her life, she had never known such love and tenderness as he expressed in this one movement.

"Louisianny," he said brokenly, when he had found his voice, "it's you as should be a-forgivin' me."

"I!" she exclaimed.

He held her in his trembling arm so close that she felt his heart quivering.

"To think," he almost whispered, "as I should not hev ben doin' ye jestice! To think as I didn't know ye well enough to do ye jestice? To think yer own father, thet's knowed ye all yer life, could hev give in to its bein' likely as ye wasn't—what he'd allers thought, an' what yer mother 'd thought, an' what ye was, honey."

"I don't—" she began falteringly.

"It's me as oughter be a-standin' ag'in' the door," he said. "It's me! I knowed every word of the first part of what ye've told me, Louisianny. I've been so sot on ye thet I've got into a kinder noticin' way with ye, an' I guessed it out. I seen it in yer face when ye stood thar tryin' to laugh on the porch while them people was a-waitin'. 'Twa'n't no nat'ral gal's laugh ye laughed, and when ye thought I wasn't a-noticin' I was a-noticin' an' a-thinkin' all the time. But I seen more than was thar, honey, an' I didn't do ye jestice—an' I've ben punished fer it. It come ag'in' me like a slung-shot. I ses to myself: 'She's ashamed o' *me!* It's *me* she's ashamed of—an' she wants to pass me off fer a stranger!'"

The girl drew off from him a little and looked up into his face wonderingly.

"You thought that!" she said. "And never told me—and humored me, and——"

"I'd oughter knowed ye better," he said; "but I've suffered fer it, Louisianny. I ses to myself: 'All the years thet we've ben sot on each other an' nussed each other through our little sick spells, an' keered fer each other, hes gone fer nothin'. She wants to pass me off fer a stranger.' Not that I blamed ye, honey. Lord! I knowed the difference betwixt us! *I'd*

knowed it long afore you did. But somehow it warn't eggsakly what I looked fer an' it was kinder hard on me right at the start. An' then the folks went away an' ye didn't go with 'em, an' thar was somethin' workin' on ye as I knowed ye wasn't ready to tell me about. An' I sot an' steddied it over an' watched ye, an' I prayed some, an' I laid wake nights a-steddyin'. An' I made up my mind thet es I'd ben the cause o' trouble to ye I'd oughter try an' sorter balance the thing. I allers 'lowed parents hed a duty to their child'en. An' I ses: 'Thar's some things thet kin be altered an' some thet cayn't. Let's alter them es kin!'"

She remembered the words well, and now she saw clearly the dreadful pain they had expressed; they cut her to her soul.

"Oh, father!" she cried. "How could you?"

"I'd oughter knowed ye better, Louisianny," he repeated. "But I didn't. I ses: 'What money an' steddyin' an' watchin'll do fer her to make up, shell be done. I'll try to make up fer the wrong I've did her onwillin'ly—onwillin'ly.' An' I went to the Springs an' I watched an' steddied thar, an' I come home an' I watched an' steddied thar—an' I hed the house fixed, an' I laid out to let ye go to Europe—though what I'd heern o' the habits o' the people, an' the brigands an' sich, went powerful

ag'in' me makin' up my mind easy. An' I never lost sight, nary minnit o' what I'd laid out fer to do—but I wasn't doin' ye jestice an' didn't suffer no more than I'd oughter. An' when ye stood up thar agen' the door, honey, with yer tears a-streamin' an' yer eyes a-shinin', an' told me what ye'd felt an' what ye'd said about—wa'l" (delicately) "about thet thar as ye thought ye wasn't worthy to do, it set my blood a-tremblin' in my veins—an' my heart a-shakin' in my side, an' me a-goin' all over—an' I was struck all of a heap, an' knowed thet the Lord hed ben better to me than I thought, an'—an' even when I was fondest on ye, an' proudest on ye, I hadn't done ye no sort o' jestice in the world—an' never could!"

There was no danger of their misunderstanding each other again. When they were calmer they talked their trouble over simply and confidingly, holding nothing back.

"When ye told me, Louisianny," said her father, "that ye wanted nothin' but me, it kinder went ag'in' me more than all the rest, fer I thinks, ses I to myself: 'It ain't true, an' she must be a-gettin' sorter hardened to it, or she'd never said it.' It seemed like it was kinder onnecessary. Lord! the onjestice I was a-doin' ye!"

They bade each other good-night again, at last.

"Fer ye're a-lookin' pale," he said. "An' I've been kinder out o' sorts myself these last two or three weeks. My dyspepsy's bin back on me ag'in, an' thet thar pain in my side's bin a-workin' on me. We must take keer o' ourselves, bein' es thar's on'y us two, an' we're so sot on each other."

He went to the door with her and said his last words to her there.

"I'm glad it come to-night," he said, in a grateful tone. "Lord! how glad I am it come to-night! S'posin' somethin' hed happened to ary one of us an' the other hed ben left not a-knowin' how it was. I'm glad it didn't last no longer, Louisianny."

And so they parted for the night.

CHAPTER XV

"Ianthy!"

It was later than usual when Louisiana awakened in the morning. She awakened suddenly and found herself listening to the singing of a bird on the tree near her window. Its singing was so loud and shrill that it overpowered her and aroused her to a consciousness of fatigue and exhaustion.

It seemed to her at first that no one was stirring in the house below, but after a few minutes she heard some one talking in her father's room—talking rapidly in monotonous tone.

"I wonder who it is," she said, and lay back upon her pillow, feeling tired out and bewildered between the bird's shrill song and the strange voice.

And then she heard heavy feet on the stairs and listened to them nervously until they reached her door and the door was pushed open unceremoniously.

The negro woman Nancy thrust her head into the room.

"Miss Louisianny, honey," she said. "Ye ain't up yet?"

"No."

"Ye'd better *git* up, honey—an' come down-stairs."

But the girl made no movement.

"Why?" she asked listlessly.

"Yer pappy, honey—he's sorter cur'us. He don't seem to be right well. He didn't seem to be quite at hisself when I went to light his fire. He——"

Louisiana sat upright in bed, her great coil of black hair tumbling over one shoulder and making her look even paler than she was.

"Father!" she said. "He was quite well late last night. It was after midnight when we went to bed, and he was well then."

The woman began to fumble uneasily at the latch.

"Don't ye git skeered, chile," she said. "Mebbe 'tain't nothin'—but seemed to me like—like he didn't know me."

Louisiana was out of bed, standing upon the floor and dressing hurriedly.

"He was well last night," she said piteously. "Only a few hours ago. He was well and talked to me and——"

She stopped suddenly to listen to the voice down-stairs—a new and terrible thought flashing upon her.

"Who is with him?" she asked. "Who is talking to him?"

"Thar ain't no one with him," was the answer. "He's by hisself, honey."

Louisiana was buttoning her wrapper at the throat. Such a tremor fell upon her that she could not finish what she was doing. She left the button unfastened and pushed past Nancy and ran swiftly down the stairs, the woman following her.

The door of her father's room stood open and the fire Nancy had lighted burned and crackled merrily. Mr. Rogers was lying high upon his pillow, watching the blaze. His face was flushed and he had one hand upon his chest. He turned his eyes slowly upon Louisiana as she entered and for a second or so regarded her wonderingly. Then a change came upon him, his face lighted up—it seemed as if he saw all at once who had come to him.

"Ianthy!" he said. "I didn't sca'cely know ye! Ye've bin gone so long! Whar hev ye bin?"

But even then she could not realize the truth. It was so short a time since he had bidden her good-night and kissed her at the door.

"Father!" she cried. "It is Louisiana! Father, look at me!"

But he was looking at her, and yet he only smiled again.

"It's bin such a long time, Ianthy," he said. "Sometimes I've thought ye wouldn't never come back at all."

And when she fell upon her knees at the bedside, with a desolate cry of terror and anguish, he did not seem to hear it at all, but lay fondling her bent head and smiling still, and saying happily:

"Lord! I *am* glad to see ye!"

When the doctor came—he was a mountaineer like the rest of them, a rough, good-natured fellow who had "read a course" with somebody and "'tended lectures in Cincinnatty"—he could tell her easily enough what the trouble was.

"Pneumony," he said. "And pretty bad at that. He hain't hed no health fer a right smart while. He hain't never got over thet spell he hed last winter. This yere change in the weather's what's done it. He was a-complainin' to me the other day about thet thar old pain in his chist. Things hes bin kinder 'cumylatin' on him."

"He does not know me!" said Louisiana. "He is very ill—he is very ill!"

Doctor Hankins looked at his patient for a moment dubiously.

"Wa-al, thet's so," he said at length. "He's purty bad off—purty bad!"

By night the house was full of visitors and volunteer nurses. The fact that "Uncle Elbert Rogers was down with pneumony, an' Louisianny thar without a soul anigh her" was enough to rouse sympathy and curiosity. Aunt 'Mandy, Aunt Ca'line, and Aunt 'Nervy came up one after the other.

"Louisianny now, she ain't nothin' but a young thing, an' don't know nothin'," they said. "An' Elbert bein' sich nigh kin, it'd look powerful bad if we didn't go."

They came in wagons or rickety buggies and brought their favorite medicines and liniments with them in slab-sided, enamel-cloth valises. They took the patient under their charge, applied their nostrums, and when they were not busy seemed to enjoy talking his symptoms over in low tones. They were very good to Louisiana, relieving her of every responsibility in spite of herself, and shaking their heads at each other pityingly when her back was turned.

"She never give him no trouble," they said. "She's got thet to hold to. An' they was powerful sot on her, both him an' Ianthy. I've heern 'em say she allus was kinder tender an' easy to manage."

Their husbands came to "sit up" with them at night, and sat by the fire talking about their crops and the elections, and expectorating with

regularity into the ashes. They tried to persuade Louisiana to go to bed, but she would not go.

"Let me sit by him, if there is nothing else I can do," she said. "If he should come to himself for a minute he would know me if I was near him."

In his delirium he seemed to have gone back to a time before her existence—the time when he was a young man and there was no one in the new house he had built, but himself and "Ianthy." Sometimes he fancied himself sitting by the fire on a winter's night and congratulating himself upon being there.

"Jest to think," he would say in a quiet, speculative voice, "that two year ago I didn't know ye—an' thar ye air, a-sittin' sewin', and the fire a-cracklin', an' the house all fixed. This yere's what I call solid comfort, Ianthy —jest solid comfort!"

Once he wakened suddenly from a sleep and finding Louisiana bending over him, drew her face down and kissed her.

"I didn't know ye was so nigh, Ianthy," he whispered. "Lord! jest to think yer allers nigh an' thar cayn't nothin' separate us."

The desolateness of so living a life outside his was so terrible to the poor child who loved him, that at times she could not bear to remain

in the room, but would go out into the yard and ramble about aimless and heart-broken, looking back now and then at the new, strange house, with a wild pang.

"There will be nothing left if he leaves me," she said. "There will be nothing."

And then she would hurry back, panting, and sit by him again, her eyes fastened upon his unconscious face, watching its every shade of expression and change.

"She'll take it mighty hard," she heard Aunt Ca'line whisper one day, "ef——"

And she put her hands to her ears and buried her face in the pillow that she might not hear the rest.

CHAPTER XVI

"Don't Do No One a Onjestice"

He was not ill very long. Toward the end of the second week the house was always full of visitors who came to sympathize and inquire and prescribe, and who, in many cases, came from their farms miles away, attracted by the news that "Uncle Elbert Rogers" was "mighty bad off." They came on horseback and in wagons or buggies—men in homespun, and women in sunbonnets—and they hitched their horses at the fence and came into the house with an awkwardly subdued air, and stood in silence by the sick-bed for a few minutes, and then rambled toward the hearth and talked in spectral whispers.

"The old man's purty low," they always said, "he's purty low." And then they added among themselves that he had "allers bin mighty clever, an' a good neighbor."

When she heard them speak of him in this manner, Louisiana knew what it meant. She never left the room again after the first day that they spoke so, and came in bodies to look at him,

and turn away and say that he had been good to them. The men never spoke to her after their first nod of greeting, and the women but rarely, but they often glanced hurriedly askance at her as she sat or stood by the sick man's pillow. Somehow none of them had felt as if they were on very familiar terms with her, though they all spoke in a friendly way of her as being "a mighty purty, still, kind o' a harmless young critter." They thought, when they saw her pallor and the anguish in her eyes, that she was "takin' it powerful hard, an' no wonder," but they knew nothing of her desperate loneliness and terror.

"Uncle Elbert he'll leave a plenty," they said in undertones. "She'll be well pervided fer, will Louisianny."

And they watched over their charge and nursed him faithfully, feeling not a little sad themselves as they remembered his simple good nature and neighborliness and the kindly prayers for which he had been noted in "meetin'."

On the last day of the second week the doctor held a consultation with Aunt 'Nervy and Aunt Ca'line on the front porch before he went away, and when they re-entered the room they spoke in whispers even lower than before and moved about stealthily. The doctor himself rode away slowly and stopped at a house or so on

the wayside, where he had no patients, to tell the inhabitants what he had told the head nurses.

"We couldn't hev expected him to stay allers," he said, "but we'll miss him mightily. He hain't a enemy in the county—nary one!"

That afternoon when the sun was setting, the sick man wakened from a long, deep sleep. The first thing he saw was the bright pale-yellow of a tree out in the yard, which had changed color since he had seen it last. It was a golden tree now as it stood in the sun, its leaves rustling in a faint, chill wind. The next thing, he knew that there were people in the room who sat silent and all looked at him with kindly, even reverent, eyes. Then he turned a little and saw his child, who bent toward him with dilated eyes and trembling, parted lips. A strange, vague memory of weary pain and dragging, uncertain days and nights came to him and he knew, and yet felt no fear.

"Louisianny!" he said.

He could only speak in a whisper and tremulously. Those who sat about him hushed their very breath.

"Lay yer head—on the piller—nigh me," he said.

She laid it down and put her hand in his. The great tears were streaming down her face, but she said not a word.

"I hain't got long—honey," he faltered. "The Lord—He'll keer—fer ye."

Then for a few minutes he lay breathing faintly, but with his eyes open and smiling as they rested on the golden foliage of the tree.

"How yaller—it is!" he whispered. "Like gold. Ianthy was powerful—sot on it. It—kinder beckons."

It seemed as if he could not move his eyes from it, and the pause that followed was so long that Louisiana could bear it no longer, and she lifted her head and kissed him.

"Father!" she cried. "Say something to *me!* Say something to *me!*"

It drew him back and he looked up into her eyes as she bent over him.

"Ye'll be happy—" he said, "afore long. I kinder—know. Lord! how I've—loved ye, honey—an' ye've desarved it—all. Don't ye do no one—a onjestice."

And then as she dropped her white face upon the pillow again he saw her no longer—nor the people, nor the room, but lay quite still with parted lips and eyes wide open, smiling still at the golden tree waving and beckoning in the wind.

This he saw last of all, and seemed still to see even when some one came silently, though with tears, and laid a hand upon his eyes.

CHAPTER XVII

A Leaf

THERE was a sunny old graveyard half a mile from the town, where the people of Bowersville laid their dead under the long grass and tangle of wild-creeping vines, and the whole countryside gathered there when they lowered the old man into his place at his wife's side. His neighbors sang his funeral hymn and performed the last offices for him with kindly hands, and when they turned away and left him there was not a man or woman of them who did not feel that they had lost a friend.

They were very good to Louisiana. Aunt 'Nervy and Aunt Ca'line deserted their families that they might stay with her until all was over, doing their best to give her comfort. It was Aunt 'Nervy who first thought of sending for the girl cousin to whom the trunkful of clothes had been given.

"Le's send for Leander's Jenny, Ca'line," she said. "Mebbe it'd help her some to hev a gal nigh her. Gals kinder onderstands each other,

an' Jenny was allus powerful fond o' Lowizy-anny."

So Jenny was sent for and came. From her lowly position as one of the fifteen in an "on-fort'nit" family she had adored and looked up to Louisiana all her life. All the brightest days in her experience had been spent at Uncle Elbert's with her favorite cousin. But there was no brightness about the house now. When she arrived and was sent up-stairs to the pretty new room Louisiana occupied she found the girl lying upon the bed. She looked white and slender in her black dress, her hands were folded palm to palm under her cheek, and her eyes were wide open.

Jenny ran to her and knelt at her side. She kissed her and began to cry.

"Oh!" she sobbed, "somehow I didn't ever think I should come here and not find Uncle Elbert. It don't seem right—it makes it like a strange place."

Then Louisiana broke into sobs, too.

"It *is* a strange place!" she cried—"a strange place—a strange place! Oh, if one old room was left—just one that I could go into and not feel so lonely!"

But she had no sooner said it than she checked herself.

"Oh, I oughtn't to say that!" she cried. "I

won't say it. He did it all for *me*, and I didn't deserve it."

"Yes, you did," said Jenny, fondling her. "He was always saying what a good child you had been—and that you had never given him any trouble."

"That was because he was so good," said Louisiana. "No one else in the whole world was so good. And now he is gone, and I can never make him know how grateful I was and how I loved him."

"He did know," said Jenny.

"No," returned Louisiana. "It would have taken a long, long life to make him know all I felt, and now when I look back it seems as if we had been together such a little while. Oh! I thought the last night we talked that there was a long life before us—that I should be old before he left me, and we should have had all those years together."

After the return from the graveyard there was a prolonged discussion held among the heads of the different branches of the family. They gathered at one end of the back porch and talked of Louisiana, who sat before the log fire in her room up-stairs.

"She ain't in the notion o' leavin' the place," said Aunt 'Nervy. "She cried powerful when I mentioned it to her, an' wouldn't hear to it.

She says over an' over ag'in: 'Let me stay in the home he made for me, Aunt Ca'line.' I reckon she's a kind o' notion Elbert 'lowed fur her to be yere when he was gone."

"Wa-al now," said Uncle Leander, "I reckon he did. He talked a heap on it when he was in a talkin' way. He's said to me: 'I want things to be jest as she'd enjoy 'em most—when she's sorter lonesome, es she will be, mebbe.' Seemed like he hed it in his mind es he warn't long fur this world. Don't let us cross her in nothin'. *He* never did. He was powerful tender on her, was Elbert."

"I seed Marthy Lureny Nance this mornin'," put in Aunt Ca'line, "an' I told her to come up an' kinder overlook things. She hain't with no one now, an' I dessay she'd like to stay an' keep house."

"I don't see nothin' ag'in' it," commented Uncle Steve, "if Louisianny don't. She's a settled woman, an's bin married, an' hain't no family to pester her sence Nance is dead."

"She was allers the through-goin' kind," said Aunt 'Nervy. "Things'll be well looked to—an' she thought a heap o' Elbert. They was raised together."

"S'pos'n' ye was to go in an' speak to Louisianny," suggested Uncle Steve.

Louisiana, being spoken to, was very tract-

able. She was willing to do anything asked of her but go away.

"I should be very glad to have Mrs. Nance here, Aunt Minerva," she said. "She was always very kind, and father liked her. It won't be like having a strange face near me. Please tell her I want her to come and that I hope she will try to feel as if she was at home."

So Marthy Lureny Nance came, and was formally installed in her position. She was a tall, strongly built woman, with blue eyes, black hair, and thick black eyebrows. She wore, when she arrived, her best alpaca gown and a starched and frilled blue sunbonnet. When she presented herself to Louisiana she sat down before her, removed this sunbonnet with a scientific flap, and hung it on the back of her chair.

"Ye look mighty peak-ed, Louisianny," she said. "Mighty peak-ed."

"I don't feel very well," Louisiana answered, "but I suppose I shall be better after a while."

"Ye're takin' it powerful hard, Louisianny," said Mrs. Nance, "an' I don't blame ye. I ain't gwine to pester ye a-talkin'. I jest come to say I 'lowed to do my plum best by ye, an' ax ye whether ye liked hop yeast or salt risin'?"

At the end of the week Louisiana and Mrs. Nance were left to themselves. Aunt 'Nervy and Aunt Ca'line and the rest had returned to

their respective homes, even Jenny had gone back to Bowersville, where she boarded with a relation and went to school.

The days after this seemed so long to Louisiana that she often wondered how she lived through them. In the first passion of her sorrow she had not known how they passed, but now that all was silence and order in the house, and she was alone, she had nothing to do but to count the hours. There was no work for her, no one came in and out for whom she might invent some little labor of love; there was no one to watch for, no one to think of. She used to sit for hours at her window watching the leaves change their color day by day, and at last flutter down upon the grass at the least stir of wind. Once she went out and picked up one of these leaves and taking it back to her room, shut it up in a book.

"Everything has happened to me since the day it was first a leaf," she said. "I have lived just as long as a leaf. That isn't long."

When the trees were bare, she one day remembered the books she had sent for when at the Springs, and she went to the place where she had put them, brought them out, and tried to feel interested in them again.

"I might learn a great deal," she said, "if I persevered. I have so much time."

But she had not read many pages before the tears began to roll down her cheeks.

"If he had lived," she said, "I might have read them to him and it would have pleased him so. I might have done it often if I had thought less about myself. He would have learned, too. He thought he was slow, but he would have learned, too, in a little while, and he would have been so proud."

She was very like her father in the simple tenderness of her nature. She grieved with the hopeless passion of a child for the unconscious wrong she had done.

It was as she sat trying to fix her mind upon these books that there came to her the first thought of a plan which was afterward of some vague comfort to her. She had all the things which had furnished the old parlor taken into one of the unused rooms—the chairs and tables, the carpet, the ornaments and pictures. She spent a day in placing everything as she remembered it, doing all without letting any one assist her. After it was arranged she left the room, and locked the door taking the key with her.

"No one shall go in but myself," she said. "It belongs to me more than all the rest."

"I never knowed her to do nothin' notionate but thet," remarked Mrs. Nance, in speaking of it afterward. "She's mighty still, an'

sits an' grieves a heap, but she ain't never notionate. Thet *was* kinder notionate fer a gal to do. She sets store on 'em 'cos' they was her pappy's an' her ma's, I reckon. It cayn't be nothin' else, fer they ain't to say stylish, though they was allers good solid-appearin' things. The picters was the on'y things es was showy."

"She's mighty pale an' slender sence her pappy died," said the listener.

"Wa-al, yes, she's kinder peak-ed," admitted Mrs. Nance. "She's kinder peak-ed, but she'll git over it. Young folks allers does."

But she did not get over it as soon as Mrs. Nance had expected, in view of her youth. The days seemed longer and lonelier to her as the winter advanced, though they were really so much shorter, and she had at last been able to read and think of what she read. When the snow was on the ground and she could not wander about the place she grew paler still.

"Louisianny," said Mrs. Nance, coming in upon her one day as she stood at the window, "ye're a-beginnin' to look like ye're Aunt Melissy."

"Am I?" answered Louisiana. "She died when she was young, didn't she?"

"She wasn't but nineteen," grimly. "She hed a kind o' love-scrape, an' when the feller merried Emmerline Ruggles she jest give right in.

They hed a quarrel, an' he was a sperrity kind o' thing an' merried Emmerline when he was mad. He cut off his nose to spite his face, an' a nice time he hed of it when it was done. Melissy was a pretty gal, but kinder consumpshony, an' she hedn't backbone enough to hold her up. She died eight or nine months after they'd quarrelled. Mebbe she'd hev died anyhow, but thet sorter hastened it up. When folks is consumpshony it don't take much to set 'em off."

"I don't think I am 'consumpshony,'" said Louisiana.

"Lord-a-massy, no!" briskly, "an' ye'd best not begin to think it. I wasn't a-meanin' thet. Ye've kinder got into a poor way steddyin' 'bout yere pappy, an' it's tellin' on ye. Ye look as if thar wasn't a thing of ye—an' ye don't take no int'russ. Ye'd oughter stir round more."

"I'm going to 'stir round' a little as soon as Jake brings the buggy up," said Louisiana. "I'm going out."

"Whar?"

"Toward town."

For a moment Mrs. Nance looked at her charge steadily, but at length her feelings were too much for her. She had been thinking this matter over for some time.

"Louisianny," she said, "you're a-gwine to

the graveyard, thet's whar ye're a-gwine an' thar ain't no sense in it. Young folks hedn't ought to hold on to trouble thataway—'tain't nat'ral. They don't gin'rally. Elbert'd be ag'in' it himself ef he knowed—an' I s'pose he does. Like as not him an' Ianthy's a-worryin' about it now, an' Lord knows ef they air it'll spile all their enjoyment. Kingdom come won't be nothin' to 'em if they're oneasy in their minds 'bout ye. Now an' ag'in it's 'peared to me that mebbe harps an' crowns an' the company o' 'postles don't set a body up all in a minnit an' make 'em forgit their flesh an' blood an' nat'ral feelin's teetotally—an' it kinder troubles me to think o' Elbert an' Ianthy worryin' an' not havin' no pleasure. Seems to me ef I was you I'd think it over an' try to cheer up an' take int'russ. Jest think how keerful yer pappy an' ma was on ye an' how sot they was on hevin' ye well an' happy."

Louisiana turned toward her. Her eyes were full of tears.

"Oh!" she whispered, "do you—do you think they know?"

Mrs. Nance was scandalized.

"Know!" she echoed. "Wa-al now, Louisianny, ef I didn't know yer raisin', an' thet ye'd been brought up with members all yer life, it'd go ag'in' me powerful to hear ye talk thetaway.

Ye *know* they know, an' thet they'll take it hard, ef they ain't changed mightily, but, changed or not, I guess thar's mighty few sperrits es hain't sense enough to see yer a-grievin' more an' longer than's good fer ye."

Louisiana turned to her window again. She rested her forehead against the framework and looked out for a little while. But at last she spoke.

"Perhaps you are right," she said. "It is true it would have hurt them when they were here. I think—I'll try to—to be happier."

"It's what'll please 'em best, if ye do, Louisianny," commented Mrs. Nance.

"I'll try," Louisiana answered. "I will go out now—the cold air will do me good, and when I come back you will see that I am—better."

"Wa-al," advised Mrs. Nance, "ef ye go, mind ye put on a plenty—an' don't stay long."

The excellent woman stood on the porch when the buggy was brought up, and having tucked the girl's wraps round her, watched her driven away.

"Mebbe me a-speakin's I did'll help her," she said. "Seems like it kinder teched her an' sot her thinkin'. She was dretfle fond of her pappy an' she was allers a purty peaceable advise-takin' little thing—though she ain't so little nuther. She's reel tall an' slim."

CHAPTER XVIII

"He Knew That I Loved You"

It was almost dark when the buggy returned. As Jake drove up to the gate he bent forward to look at something.

"Thar's a critter hitched to the fence," he remarked. "'Tain't no critter from round yere. I never seen it afore."

Mrs. Nance came out upon the porch to meet them. She was gently excited by an announcement she had to make.

"Louisianny," she said, "thar's a man in the settin'-room. He's a-waitin' to see ye. I asked him ef he hed anything to sell, an' he sed no he hedn't nothin'. He's purty *gen*-teel an' stylish, but not to say showy, an' he's polite sort o' manners."

"Has he been waiting long?" Louisiana asked.

"He's ben thar half a hour, an' I've hed the fire made up sence he come."

Louisiana removed her hat and cloak and gave them to Mrs. Nance. She did it rather slowly, and, having done it, crossed the hall to the sitting-room door, opened it, and went in.

There was no light in the room but the light of the wood fire, but that was very bright. It was so bright that she had not taken two steps into the room before she saw clearly the face of the man who waited for her.

It was Laurence Ferrol.

She stopped short and her hands fell at her sides. Her heart beat so fast that she could not speak.

His heart beat fast, too, and it beat faster still when he noted her black dress and saw how pale and slight she looked in it. He advanced toward her and, taking her hand in both his, led her to a chair.

"I have startled you too much," he said. "Don't make me feel that I was wrong to come. Don't be angry with me."

She let him seat her in the chair and then he stood before her and waited for her to speak.

"It was rather—sudden," she said, "but I am not—angry."

There was a silence of a few seconds, because he was so moved by the new look her face wore that he could not easily command his voice and words.

"Have you been ill?" he asked gently, at last.

He saw that she made an effort to control herself and answer him quietly, but before she spoke she gave up even the effort. She did not

try to conceal or wipe away the great tears that fell down her cheeks as she looked up at him.

"No, I have not been ill," she said. "My father is dead."

And as she uttered the last words her voice sank almost into a whisper.

Just for a breath's space they looked at each other, and then she turned in her chair, laid her arm on the top of it and her face on her arm, with a simple helpless movement.

"He has been dead three months," she whispered, weeping.

His own eyes were dim as he watched her. He had not heard of this before. He walked to the other end of the room and back again twice. When he neared her the last time he stopped.

"Must I go away?" he asked unsteadily. "I feel as if I had no right here."

But she did not tell him whether he must go or stay.

"If I stay I must tell you why I came and why I could not remain away," he said.

She still drooped against her chair and did not speak, and he drew still nearer to her.

"It does not seem the right time," he said, "but I must tell you even if I go away at once afterward. I have never been happy an hour since we parted that wretched day. I have never ceased to think of what I had begun to

hope for. I felt that it was useless to ask for it then—I feel as if it was useless now, but I must ask for it. Oh!" desperately, "how miserably I am saying it all! How weak it sounds!"

In an instant he was kneeling on one knee at her side and had caught her hand and held it between both his own.

"I'll say the simplest thing," he said. "I love you. Everything is against me, but I love you, and I am sure I shall never love another woman."

He clasped her hand close and she did not draw it away.

"Won't you say a word to me?" he asked. "If you only tell me that this is the wrong time and that I must go away now, it will be better than some things you might say."

She raised her face and let him see it.

"No," she said, "it is not that it is the wrong time. It is a better time than any other, because I am so lonely and my trouble has made my heart softer than it was when I blamed you so. It is not that it is the wrong time, but——"

"Wait a minute," he broke in. "Don't—don't do me an injustice!"

He could not have said anything else so likely to reach her heart. She remembered the last faltering words she had heard as she bent over

the pillow when the sun was shining on the golden tree with the wind waving its branches.

"Don't do no one a onjestice, honey—don't ye—do no one—a onjestice."

"Oh," she cried out, "he told me that I must not—he told me, before he died!"

"What!" said Ferrol. "He told you not to be unjust to *me?*"

"It was you he meant," she answered. "He knew I had been hard to you—and he knew I——"

She cowered down a little and Ferrol folded her in his arms.

"Don't be hard to me again," he whispered. "I have been so unhappy—I love you so tenderly. Did he know that you—speak to me, Louise."

She put her hand upon his shoulder.

"He knew that I loved you," she said, with a little sob.

She was a great favorite among her husband's friends in New York the next year. One of her chief attractions for them was that she was a "new type." They said that of her invariably when they delighted in her and told each other how gentle she was and how simple and sweet. The artists made "studies" of her, and adored her, and were enthusiastic over her beauty;

while among the literary ones it was said, again and again, what a foundation she would be for a heroine of the order of those who love and suffer for love's sake and grow more adorable through their pain.

But these, of course, were only the delightful imaginings of art, talked over among themselves, and Louisiana did not hear of them. She was very happy and very busy. There was a gay joke current among them that she was a most tremendous bookworm, and that her literary knowledge was something for weak, ordinary mortals to quail before. The story went, that by some magic process she committed to memory the most appalling works half an hour after they were issued from the press, and that, secretly, Laurence stood very much in awe of her and was constantly afraid of exposing his ignorance in her presence. It was certainly true that she read a great deal, and showed a wonderful aptness and memory, and that Laurence's pride and delight in her were the strongest and tenderest feelings of his heart.

Almost every summer they spent in North Carolina, filling their house with those of their friends who would most enjoy the simple quiet of the life they led. There were numberless pictures painted among them at such times and numberless new "types" discovered.

"But you'd scarcely think," it was said sometimes, "that it is here that Mrs. Laurence is on her native heath."

And though all the rest of the house was open, there was one room into which no one but Laurence and Louisiana ever went—a little room, with strange, ugly furniture in it, and bright-colored lithographs upon the walls.

THE PRETTY SISTER OF JOSÉ

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CHAPTER I

It had taken him a long time, and it had cost him—José—much hard labor, to prepare for his aged grandmother and Pepita the tiny home outside Madrid, to which he at last brought them in great triumph one hot summer's day, when the very vine-leaves and orange-trees themselves were dusty. It had been a great undertaking for him in the first place, for he was a slow fellow—José; slow as he was dull and kind and faithful to Pepita and the grandmother. He had a body as big as an ox, and a heart as big as his body, but he was slow and dull in everything but one thing—that was his carpenter work. He was well enough at that—and more than well enough, for he had always had a fancy and a knack for it from the time when as a boy he had worked in his uncle's vineyards and tilled his fields and fed his beasts. His uncle had been counted a rich man among his neighbors, but when his sister and her husband died and left the two

children, José and Pepita, penniless, and with no protector save himself and their grandmother, already an old woman, it was upon the grandmother that the burden fell, for he did nothing for them except to give them, grudgingly now and then, a few poor vegetables or a little fallen fruit. It is true that when José was old enough to labor in the fields he gave him work to do, but he paid him ill and treated him ill also, giving him poor food and harsh words—and often enough blows the poor lad did not deserve. So it came about that while he was at his work José fell into the way of planning to escape from all this, and make another home for himself and his pretty child-sister and the old woman. He knew there was only one way to do it: if he could carry his one gift where it would be of more use to him than it could possibly be in a poor small village; if he could carry it to a market where there were more people and where work was better paid for. Where the king and queen were, of course, there must be more money—and one could find more to do and live better. It was Padre Alejandro, the village priest, who had suggested this to him first. He was a kind, jovial old fellow, the padre, and had seen something of the world, too, long ago, which was perhaps why he was never very hard upon a simple sinner who went

to confession, and could give a bit of unecclesiastical advice now and then. He had always been kind to José, and as Pepita had grown prettier and prettier every day, he had often spoken of her to old Jovita, and said she should be well taught and taken care of, and once even —when she had come into the house with a basket of grapes on her little head, rose-flushed with the hot day, her black hair curling in moist silken rings on her forehead—he had been betrayed into the worldly remark that such pretty young things ought to have something brighter to look forward to than hard work and scant fare, which made them old before their time, and left them nothing to look back upon. But he only said it to Jovita, and Jovita only stared a little, it never having occurred to her that there was anything much in the world but hard labor and poverty. And what difference did it make that one was pretty, except that it became more probable that some gay, lazy fellow would pretend to fall in love with one, and then after marriage leave one all the work to do and a houseful of hungry children to feed? She had seen that often enough. Had it not been so with Pepita's mother, who died at twenty-five almost an old woman, worn out with trouble and hard usage?

But afterward, when Padre Alejandro saw

José, he spoke of Pepita to him also, though only as if incidentally among other things.

"She should marry some good fellow who could take care of her," he said. "If you go to Madrid it will also be better for her."

And so the end of it all was that after much slow planning and many hopes and fears, and more than one disappointment, there came a day when the uncle was thrown into a violent rage by losing his best and most patient worker, and the poor cottage stood empty, and José and Pepita and Jovita found themselves in a new world.

What a new world it seemed to them all! Through the help of Padre Alejandro and an old friend of his, José had work bringing him pay which appeared absolute wealth to him. The cottage, with its good walls and roof, its neat rooms and garden, being compared with the mere hut they had left behind, seemed a palace. For the first few days, indeed, Jovita was scarce at ease; to feel no necessity for heavy labor, to have food enough, to be so comfortable, seemed unnatural, as if it might finally bring disaster. But it was not so with Pepita. All the joy of youth, all its delights and expectations, filled her heart. To be so near the great, grand city, to look forward to seeing all its splendors, to walk in its streets, to share

in the amusements she had heard of—this was rapture. If she had been pretty before, she became now ten times prettier; her lovely eyes grew larger with laughter and wonder and joy; her light feet almost danced; her color was like that of a damask rose. Each day brought new innocent happiness to her. When José came home from his work at night she sat by his side and asked him a thousand questions. Had he seen the palace—had he seen the king or the queen—what were the people doing—were the public gardens beautiful? And then she would take the guitar, which had belonged to her gay father in his gayest days, and sit out in the little garden, among the vines and lemon-trees and oleanders, and play and sing one song after another, while José smoked and rested, and wondered at and delighted in her. It was she who had inherited all her father's gayety and spirit. José had none of them, and, being slow and simple, had always found her a wonder and a strange pleasure. She had, indeed, been the one bright thing in his life, and even her wilfulness had a charm for him. He always gave way to it and was content. Had she not even once defied the uncle when no one else would have dared to do it? holding her little head up and confronting him in such a burst of pretty rage that the old curmudgeon had

been quite quelled for once in his life, and had ever afterward treated her with a kind of respect, even saying to a neighbor that "the lad was a fool, but the little devil had something in her, after all."

In all his plannings it was Pepita José had thought of first. Madrid to him was only a sort of setting for Pepita; the clean, comfortable cottage a home for Pepita; the roses and lemon blossoms she would wear in her hair; under the fine grape-vines she would sit in the evening and play on her guitar. His wages would give her comfort and buy her pretty, simple dresses. And then every one would see her beauty, and when she went to mass, or with himself and Jovita to the Prado or the Paseo de la Virgen del Puerto, people would look at her and tell each other how pretty she was, and all this would end in time in a good marriage perhaps. And she would be loved by some nice fellow, and have a home of her own, and be as happy as the day was long. There was only one obstacle in the way of this excellent plan; it was only a small obstacle, but—it was Pepita herself! Singularly enough, Pepita had a fixed antipathy to marriage. She had early announced her intention of remaining unmarried, and those young men who in her native village had desired to make love to her

had been treated with disapproval and disdain. Knowing as little of love as a young bird unfledged, her coldness was full of innocent cruelty. She made no effort to soften any situation. She was willing to dance and laugh and sing, but when she found herself confronting lover-like tremors and emotion, she was unsparing candor itself.

"Why should I listen to you?" she had said more than once. "I do not love you. You do not please me. When you wish to marry me, I hate you. Go away, and speak to some one else."

"I will never marry any one," she said to José. "I will stay with you and be happy. Girls who marry grow ugly and are wretched. Their husbands do not love them after they are married. They must work and slave and take care of the house and the children. Look at Tessa! Her husband used to be wild about her. She could make him pale with misery if she turned away from him; he used to follow her about everywhere. Now he makes eyes at Juanita, and beats Tessa if she complains. And don't we both remember how it was with our mother? I will never love any one, and never be married. Let them love me if they are so stupid, but I will be left alone. I care nothing for any of them."

The truth is that José knew it was what she remembered of her mother's unhappiness and what Jovita had told her which was the foundation of all this. Did he not remember it himself, and remember, with a shudder, those first miserable years of their childhood—the great, beautiful, wretched eyes of their mother, their gay, handsome father, and his careless cruelty and frequent brutality? Had not Pepita and himself clung together hidden in the loft at night, listening to their mother's sobs, and often to the sound of blows and curses rained down upon her because she was no longer a beauty, and there were beauties who had smiles to bestow on handsome fellows who were free, and even upon those who were not? It was enough to irritate any handsome fellow—this one had thought—to come home to a squalid place after enjoyment, and be forced to face poverty and children and a haggard wife with large staring eyes, red with weeping. Yes, Pepita and José remembered all this, and upon Pepita's character it had left curious traces. Young as she was, she had awakened quite grand passions in more than one heart, and on two or three occasions the suitors had been of far better fortune than herself—one of them, indeed, being the only son of a rich farmer, who might have chosen a wife of much greater importance than

this pretty, scornful child, and whose family rebelled bitterly against his folly, and at last sent him away to Seville, but not before Pepita herself had coolly trodden him under her small feet.

"I like you less than any of them," she said, fixing her great, direct eyes upon him when he revealed his frenzy. "Go and marry that girl your father chose for you—if she will have you. They have no need to be afraid and speak ill of me. I don't want you. I can't bear to have you stand near me."

To José it never occurred to complain of her, but Jovita's sense of worldly advantage was outraged at this time, and she did not hesitate to express herself with much freedom and grumbling.

"God knows, I want no haste," she said; "but this is a chance for any girl. And see what a fool she is! But that is as it always happens. There will come along some worthless fellow, and she will be fooled like the rest, and be ready enough to run after him."

"I!" said Pepita, who stood in the doorway. "I!" And she opened her dark eyes in genuine anger and amazement.

"Yes, you," answered Jovita. "And you will be worse than any of them. Girls who think themselves too good to be spoken to are always

easiest to coax when they find their match. Let him come, and you'll drop like a ripe grape."

"He will never come," said Pepita. "Never!" And there was not a shade of doubt in her look —nothing but cold indignation at Jovita's ill humor. "I am not afraid of men. They are all stupid. They think they can have anything they want, and they can have nothing. They have to ask, and it is the girls who can say 'No'; and then they are miserable, and beg and beg until one detests them. If any one said 'No,' to me, I would not let them see it hurt me. They should think I did not care."

"You will not always say 'No,'" grumbled Jovita. "Wait till the day for 'Yes' comes. You'll say it fast enough. That's the way with women."

A bewitching little smile slowly curved Pepita's lips and crept into her eyes.

"I am not a woman," she said, looking out at the sun-warmed vineyards. "He said so himself. Felipe said: 'You are not a woman; you are a witch, and no one can touch your heart or conquer you.' I will be a witch."

Secretly she had liked those words better than any of the adoring praises she had heard before. She liked the suggestion that she was invincible and safe from all danger—to be a witch—to be

free from all this disastrous folly—to be unconquerable. Yes, that pleased her. It was not her fault that they would fall in love with her. What did she do to them? Nothing. She never allowed them to come near her or touch her; she never gave them tender glances or words. She laughed and was Pepita—that was all. Then it was no fault of hers.

And yet her little heart was warm enough. She loved José passionately; she loved Jovita; she loved little children and animals, and they loved her in return; old men and women adored her because of her simple, almost childish kindness and her readiness to help those who needed her young strength and bright spirit. It was only men who made love who were shown no mercy. She did not know that they needed mercy. She did not understand—that was all. It was as José had known it would be. When on the first holiday he took her to the public gardens with Jovita, every one who passed them gave her a second look; many turned to watch her; certainly there was not a man who did not glance over his shoulder at the bewitching girlish figure with the small round waist, at the piquant radiant face, at the well-carried little head with the red rose blooming in its cloud of soft black hair. It was not long before two or three who were José's fellow workmen sought him out and

greeted him with great warmth. They had, it appeared, a great deal to say and many attentions to lavish upon him. Such a fine fellow, this José—such a good fellow—such a workman as was seldom seen in Madrid! And what a fine day for pleasure! And the Paseo de la Virgen del Puerto—there never were such gardens for sport. And all the time each one looked at Pepita, and lucky indeed was the man with mother and sisters to help him to make friends. And never had old Jovita met with such civilities and encountered such deference. Pepita had the joy of a young bird in its first flight. The air of gayety enlivening everything, the people in their holiday clothes, the blue sky, the sunshine, the cheap simple pleasures of the day, were intoxicating delights to her. She made friends with the girls and their parents, and was even gracious to the young men who hung about José and somehow seemed to find his neighborhood more attractive than any other. It was from one of these young men (his name was Manuel) she first heard of Sebastiano—the gay, the wonderful, the renowned Sebastiano. He had asked her, this Manuel, if she was going to the Plaza de Toros to see the bull-fight the following week, and when she said she did not know—that she had never seen a bull-fight—he found a great deal

to say. He described the wonders of the great bull-ring, where twelve thousand people could be accommodated, and where grand and beautiful ladies richly dressed and surrounded by their lovers and husbands uttered cries of joy and excitement as the fight became more dangerous, and both bulls and toreadors showed greater courage and fire; he described the costumes, the music, the picadors dashing in upon their horses; the banderilleros with their darts and ribbons; the matador with his reckless daring, his nerves and muscles of steel, and his lightning leaps. And then he described Sebastiano. Never before, it appeared from his enthusiasm, had Madrid known such a matador as Sebastiano. Never one so handsome, so dashing, so universally adored. When he appeared in the ring, what a roar of applause went up! When he made his proud bow to the president, and said, "I go to slay this bull for the honor of the people of Madrid and the most excellent president of this tourney," and threw his hat away and moved forward, waving his scarlet cloak, what excitement there was awakened! Songs were sung about him in the streets, fans were ornamented with pictures of his daring deeds, there were stories of great ladies who had wept their eyes out for love of him, and, as to the women of his own class, there was not a girl in Madrid who did not dream of him.

"Why?" said Pepita, in her cold, soft voice, and with the simply cold and curious look in her great, richly lashed eyes.

"Because they are in love with him—all of them," replied Manuel sweepingly.

"Why?" said Pepita again.

"'Why?'" Manuel echoed, somewhat bewildered by the frank, indifferent ignoring of all natural reasons in this question—"'why?' Because he is so tall and strong and well made, because he is handsome, because he is more daring and graceful than any of the others—because he is Sebastiano."

Pepita laughed, and opened and shut her fan quickly.

"Why do you laugh?" inquired Manuel.

"I was thinking how he must despise them," she answered.

"Oh, no!" said Manuel, who was not very clever; "he is always good to women. There was Sarita—a poor little thing who had always lived in the country. She saw him at her first bull-fight and was never happy afterward. She could think of nothing else, and she was too innocent to hide it. She used to slip away from home and contrive to follow him when he did not see her. She found a woman who knew some one who knew him, and she gave her all her little savings in presents to bribe her to be her friend and talk to her about him. Once or

twice she met him, and because she was such a pretty little one, he spoke kindly to her and praised her eyes and her dancing. He did not know she was in love with him."

Pepita laughed again.

"Why do you do that?" Manuel asked.

"He knew," said Pepita. "He would *think* she was, even if she cared nothing for him, and since she did care he would know before she did and would be proud of it, and make it as much worse as he could."

Manuel gazed at her a moment in silence, twirling his rather small mustache. This beautiful, cool, mocking little person, the melting softness of whose eyes and lips should have promised such feminine tenderness and emotion, bewildered him greatly; it was plain that she was wholly unmoved by the glories of Sebastiano, and saw no glamour in his romances. What other girl would have asked "Why?"—and in that tone? It was difficult to go on with his story.

"He could not help it that she was in love with him," he said. "And she could not help it."

"Why?" inquired Pepita for the third time, and with a prettier coolness than before.

"Why," stammered Manuel, "because—because that is the way with all of them."

Pepita showed all her little gleaming teeth, and then put the stem of a rose between them and held it there like a cigarette as she looked under her eyelashes at the people. The rose was not as red as her scornful little mouth.

"He was always kind to her when he saw her," continued Manuel. "Once he gave her his *devisa*. When she died she held it in her hand and would not let it go. It was buried with her. She was a pretty child—Sarita—but she had always lived in the country and knew nothing."

"I have always lived in the country and I know nothing," said Pepita, mocking him with her great eyes; "but *I* can help anything I choose. It should be the others who cannot help it."

She thought him dull and tiresome, and soon wished he would go away, but he could not help it, and lingered about with all sorts of stupid excuses. The more she bewildered him, the more he was fascinated. It was almost enough to stand and stare at her and hear her voice as she talked to the others. How pretty she was—that girl—how she held her head as if she was some high-born lady instead of a peasant! When some passer-by, more bold than the rest, made (loud enough to be heard) some comment upon her beauty, it did not disturb her in the least

—it was as if it were nothing to her. Was it possible that there could live a girl who did not care that she was so pretty? But to imagine that she did not care was to make a great mistake—she cared very much. Ever since she had been a tiny child her little mirror and the water of the fountain had reflected back to her this pretty face, with its soft rose of cheek and mouth, its dark liquid eyes, and soft babyish rings of hair curling on the forehead. She had always heard too that she was pretty, and as she had grown older she had found out something else—namely, that she had a power more strong and subtle than that of her beauty—a power people did not even try to resist. She did not call it by any name herself or understand it in the least. She often wondered at it, and even sometimes had a childish secret terror lest the Evil One might have something to do with it; particularly when, without making any effort, when simply standing apart and looking on at the rest, with a little smile she had drawn to her side the stupid love-making for which she cared nothing. It was not so with Dolores and Maria and Isabella, who were pretty too. Somehow, handsome as they were, they must use their eyes on their lovers, they must laugh and dance and talk to be adored, while she need do nothing but be Pepita.

When, late that evening, she sat with José under the vines, the air about them heavy with jasmine and orange and lemon blossoms, she asked a great many questions about the bull-fight. It must be a grand thing to see—so many people, such gay colors, such music! José could describe it better than Manuel. He must tell her all about it.

He described it as well as he could, and in spite of his slow speech made quite an exciting picture for her; or, rather, she found it exciting, as she found all things just now in their novelty. Before Jovita and she had arrived, while he was making his small preparations for them, he had seen a bull-fight or so, and no point of detail had escaped his deliberate mind. He always remembered things—José.

"But you shall go," he said; "you shall go and see for yourself the very next time. It comes next week. We will go and take Jovita."

Pepita clapped her hands for joy. She sprang up and danced a few steps in her childish delight.

"That will be happiness!" she said. "What happiness! Perhaps the king and queen will be there!"

"You will see Sebastiano," said José seriously.

"I do not care for Sebastiano," cried Pepita petulantly.

"You do not care," said José, in blank amaze, "for Sebastiano? You do not care?"

Pepita shrugged her shoulders.

"They talk too much of him," she answered, "and he is too vain. He thinks all women are in love with him, and that if a girl comes from the country she knows nothing, and will die of love if she only sees him."

"I did not know that," said José, staring. "I never heard them say so. They call him a fine fellow."

"I never heard them say so," Pepita answered scornfully; "but I know it. I am sure he is a fool," which remark caused José much bewilderment, and led him to reflect long and deeply, but did not, however, lead him to any conclusion but that Pepita was ruled by one of her caprices. He was rather afraid to admit that he himself had enjoyed the magnificent honor of seeing this great hero out of the ring; that through a quite miraculous favor he had even been allowed to speak to him and to hear him speak, as he stood the centre of a circle of admirers in a wine-shop. He had been saving this to tell Pepita, but now he thought it well to save it a little longer.

But when the day of the bull-fight arrived it was not possible to conceal it.

Ah! the wonders, the splendors of that day

from the first hour! At its very dawning Pepita was up and singing. Jovita must take her rest, that she might be in her best humor to enjoy the festivities, and not spoil them by grumbling. Pepita needed no rest; her little feet danced as she moved; as she made her preparations for the morning meal she chatted incessantly to José, asking a thousand questions. Everything conspired to add to her joys. The sky was deep brilliant blue, but there was a light breeze to make the heat bearable; the birds sang until their little throats throbbed; the flowers in the garden seemed to have flung out new masses of bloom, to make the small world about them brighter. In her chamber, near the roof, Pepita's gala dress lay upon her bed, her new little shoes upon the floor; she had seen them in the moonlight each time she had awakened in the night. A year ago it would not have seemed possible that such pretty finery could ever be hers, even in dreams; but now almost anything seemed possible in this new and enchanting life.

And when she was dressed how bewitching she was! how her rose of a face glowed and dimpled! how enchanting was the velvet darkness of her eyes! how airy the poise of her little black head, with its brilliant flower tucked in at the side of the knot of curly hair! Jovita

stared at her and made a queer half-internal sound of exclamation. It was not her way to express approval at all freely, and she had no opinion of people who wasted time in telling girls they were pretty. But José looked at the girl as he might have looked at some rare tropical bird which had suddenly flown into the house. He looked and looked again, pulling his mustache, his not always alert face warming.

"Yes, yes," he said, "it all looks very well; that dress is pretty. None of the other girls will look better. Even Candida——"

Pepita laughed. Candida had been considered a great beauty in the village they had left, but she knew she was prettier than Candida.

José laughed also, though he scarcely knew why. Then with rather a cautious and uncertain air he produced a gay fan—a cheap one, but brilliant with color.

"This—" he began.

Pepita caught it from him, and unfurled it with a quick turn of her wrist. On one side was a picture—a dashing, erect figure, in a richly hued costume.

"It is Sebastiano," said José guiltily.

Pepita nodded her head and smiled.

"I knew it," she said; "I knew he would look like that."

"There is no other man who can slay a bull as he can," said José.

"Let him slay them," answered Pepita. And she stood and waved her fan with the prettiest inscrutable air in the world.

The journey to the Plaza de Toros was almost as delightful as the bull-fight itself to Pepita. The streaming crowds of people, all bent in one direction, and all in their gayest dress and mood, laughing, jostling each other, chatting, exchanging salutations and jokes, the grand carriages rolling by with fine ladies and gentlemen in them, the rattling old diligences, omnibuses, and *tartanes*, whose passengers seemed more hilarious than the occupants of the more splendid equipages, the ringing of mule bells, the shouts of drivers, the cracking whips, the sunshine, the color, the very dust itself, all added to the excitement of the hour. And as they made their way through the throng, it was again as it had been that first Sunday at the Paseo de la Virgen del Puerto, heads turned and exclamations were uttered when Pepita went by. And somehow it seemed that José was better known than even he himself had imagined, he received so many greetings. The truth was that already those who had seen the girl had spoken of her among themselves and to others, their readily fired Spanish natures aflame and elate. And those who had not seen, but only heard of her, were in as susceptible a condition as the more fortunate ones. She had been graphic-

ally and dramatically described again and again, so that by many a one she was recognized as "the pretty sister of José."

That was what they called her—"the pretty sister of José." She heard it half a dozen times, but never once even so much as lifted her long lashes. She was so used to admiration that it was as if they spoke of some one else, and it moved her not in the least, as she sat watching the bulls, to know that bold or languishing eyes dwelt upon her face, and that efforts were being constantly made to attract her attention.

It was a magnificent day—every one said so; there were splendid bulls and splendid dresses, and the fighters were in superb condition. The people were in good spirits too—the little breeze tempering the heat had, perhaps, something to do with it. Everything pleased them; they applauded wildly, and uttered shouts of encouragement and delight to bulls and toreadors alike. The grand people were richly attired; beautiful ladies watched with excited eyes the bulls, wearing their colors in rosettes of satin and glittering tinsel; the thousands of waving, brilliantly hued fans fluttered like a swarm of butterflies; the music filled the air. Pepita sat in a dream of joy, the color coming and going on her cheeks, her rapture glowing in her eyes. She was a Spanish girl, and not so far in ad-

vance of her age that the terrible features of the pastime going on before her could obscure its brilliancy and excitement. Truth to tell, she entirely forgot Sebastiano, not even recognizing him in the pageant of the grand entry, she was so absorbed in its glitter and blaze of color.

But at the killing of the bull, that was different. Just a moment before, she had awakened to the fact that Manuel was near her—near enough to speak. He had been staring at her, and growing more restless every moment, until he had at last attracted the attention of José and Jovita, and his first words to her came amid shouts of applause and delight.

"Sebastiano," he said; "it is Sebastiano."

Pepita turned to look. With what a proud and careless air he advanced; with what a strong, light step; how he held his head and shoulders; how his gold and silver garnishings glittered; how the people called to him with a sort of caressing ecstasy! They adored him; he was their idol. Yes, there was a thrill in it, even for her cold heart. She felt a quick pulsation. To be so proud and triumphant and daring—to be the central point of everything—to be able to awake this exultant fervor—was something after all. And he was beautiful too, though she cared nothing for that, except as she could see

that it added to his triumphs and made them more complete. His athletic grace of bearing, his dark, spirited face, with its passionate Andalusian eyes, their shadows intensified by the close, long black lashes, the very arch of his foot, and superb movement of his limbs, would have set him apart from ordinary, less fortunate mortals; but to have all this and be also the demigod of these impassioned people, it must be worth living for. If one cared for men, if one did not find them tiresome, if one was simple enough—like Sarita—to be carried away by things, there was at least something in all this to interest one a little.

"It is Sebastiano," said José.

But Sebastiano was addressing the president of the games. He extended his glittering sword, and made his announcement in a clear, rich voice. Pepita listened as he spoke. And then the most thrilling excitement of the sport began. It was no child's play Sebastiano had before him. The fierce black bull, glaring at him with bent head and fiery eyes, uttering low, muttering bellowings of rage as he tore at the earth, throwing up the dust in a cloud, was a foe worthy of his mettle. He was a bull with vicious points and treacherous ones. Already goaded to fury by the play of the picadors and banderilleros, he must be watched, studied, excited,

baffled; not one of his movements must be lost, or even regarded as trifling; wariness, quickness, magnificent daring, the subtlest forethought, all were needed. What play it was! what a match between brute cunning, power, and ferocity, and human courage, adroitness, and calculation! The brilliant, graceful figure was scarcely a moment in repose; it leaped and darted, the bright cloak waving, inviting, the bright sword glittering in the sun—it toyed with death and peril, evading both with an exultant grace and swiftness marvellous to behold, and rousing the onlookers to shouts of joy and triumph. Even old Jovita wakened to a touch of fire which seemed like a renewal of her long-past youth. José and Manuel joined their cries with the rest. Pepita felt again—yes, more than once—that sudden throb and thrill.

And when at last the end was reached, with what a superb spring the last splendid blow was given! No need of a second; the bull staggered, shuddered, fell forward upon his knees, sank upon his side. Sebastiano stood erect, a brilliant, careless, triumphant figure again, the air resounding with deafening applause.

"You have seen him," cried Manuel to Pepita—"you have seen Sebastiano?"

"Yes," she answered a little breathlessly, "I have seen him."

But Sebastiano was addressing the president of the games.

And even as she spoke she knew that he had seen her; she knew it even before Manuel spoke again in great excitement.

"He looks this way—he looks at us—at you."

It was quite true. Something had attracted his attention to the tier of seats in which they sat, some cry—who knows what? perhaps some subtle magnetic influence. He turned his head with a quick movement, and his eyes fell and fastened themselves instantly upon the brilliant little face glowing like some bright flower among those humbler and less blooming.

"He looks at you, Pepita," said José.

"He looks at you and at Jovita," Pepita answered. And she laughed and turned her face away.

But not before Sebastiano had seen it well. It was Fate. Yes, he knew that. He had been loved often; he had had romantic adventures, but it had always been he who had received and the others who had given; he had always remained Sebastiano, the hero, the adored. And now he stood and looked at a little head half concealed by a fan, and forgot for a moment where he was, and that the people were still shouting their applause in deafening tumult.

CHAPTER II

Pepita and the others, Manuel with them, ended their gala-day with still another festivity. They dined together at a little café, and heard the bull-fight fought over again by those around them. At a table near them sat three chulos, who talked together in voices loud enough to be heard throughout their meal. And it was of Sebastiano they spoke, giving dramatic recitals of his daring deeds, telling each other of what he had done, of what he could do, and that Madrid had never seen his rival or peer. And then his conquests. It was true that noble ladies—beautiful and noble—had sent him messages and tokens. Gonsalvo, who was his intimate friend, could tell many things if he chose. Sebastiano had brilliant triumphs. Once he had even been in great danger because the woman who loved and sought him was of such rank that her relatives would have resorted to the stiletto rather than allow her infatuation to continue.

"But it is said truly that he had no love for her—that he has little for any of them," said

one. "They run after him too much, these women."

"But there was one to-day—" began one of the others. "I heard it of Alfonso—he saw her at the bull-fight—Sebastiano—and tried to find out——"

He made a movement at this moment which brought Pepita directly within his view. She had been hidden from him before by the figure of Jovita. He stopped with his wine untasted and stared at her. A moment later he bent forward and spoke in a lower tone to his companions, who turned to look also. Alfonso had pointed her out to him as she left the Plaza de Toros, and he had recognized her again.

"The little one is there," was what he said, "behind you. He asked if any of us had seen her before; if we knew her name."

Pepita did not hear him, and did not know that from that hour they would all know her, or that at least there would be few of them who did not. For Sebastiano to show an interest in a woman, to even go so far as to ask her name, was such a new thing that it must be spoken of and attract attention to her. And that she was not a fine lady, but only a pretty unknown girl with a rose in her hair, made the matter all the more exciting. When she fell asleep, tired and happy, that night, already she was on the

road to fame. Sebastiano, who was the adored of his order, who in spite of his adventures sought no woman, had asked her name, had made efforts to discover it, and had learned that among those who had had the good fortune to see and speak to her she was known as "the pretty sister of José."

A week from this time José came home one evening bringing Manuel with him. Manuel was often with him—in fact he had many friends; almost every day some gay or grave young fellow managed to attach himself to him, and somehow the acquaintance always shared itself soon afterward with Pepita. But Manuel appeared oftener than the rest, having a timid obstinacy, and seeming only puzzled and not discouraged by the indifference which sometimes ignored his very existence. On this particular evening he was moved from his usual calm, and so was José. They had seen Sebastiano; they had spoken to him; in the presence of a circle of his friends and admirers he had drunk wine with them.

"We were passing the wine-shop and we saw him," explained Manuel, "and we went in to look on a little and hear him talk. One of the chulos who stood near spoke to him quickly when he saw us—as if he knew us—and presently the same chulo came and spoke to José,

and soon Sebastiano came and spoke too. The one who approached us first was one of the three who drank at the table near us on the evening after the bull-fight. Once, in his boyhood, Sebastiano lived near the village you left; he knew Padre Alejandro and some others; he was pleased to see José and speak of them—it was as if they were friends at once."

"He has a good heart," put in José; "they all say that of him. He remembered everything—even old Juan, who lived to be a hundred and was bent double. He asked if he lived yet. It seems strange that he was once so near us, and was a little lad, ill-used and poor. He is not too proud to remember it. He would be a good friend to one in trouble—Sebastiano—though he is rich and spoken of by the whole world."

So great a celebrity José was convinced must be known to the entire universe. That night, as Pepita made ready for her bed, old Jovita, who had already retired, lay and looked at her.

The girl stood in the flood of brilliant white moonlight which bathed part of the bare room; her round dimpled arms were lifted as she unwound the soft dusky coils of her hair, to which there yet clung a few stars of jasmine. There was the shadow of a smile on her lips, and she was humming a tune.

"What does he want with José—this Sebastiano?" said Jovita grumblingly.

"Who knows?" said Pepita.

"He wants something," Jovita went on. "They don't make friends with those beneath them for nothing, these fine ones. They all talk of you, these foolish fellows, and he has heard, and makes friends so that he can see you."

"What do they say of me?" asked Pepita, without deigning to look up.

"Men are all fools," grumbled Jovita; "and they think girls are fools too. They say you have a pretty face; and he thinks he can make a fool of you if you are not one."

"Does he?" said Pepita, with a dimpling cruel little smile. "Let him come to-morrow—to-night. Let him begin."

"He will begin soon enough," Jovita answered. "You will see. Be sure he does not play the old game with you as he did with Sarita."

Pepita shook the small stray blossoms out of her hair and began to retwist the coil, breaking into singing in a clear voice:

"White, white is the jasmine flower;
Let its stars light thee
Here to my casement,
Where I await thee.
White, white is the jasmine flower,
Sweet, sweet is the heart of the rose,
Sweet my mouth's blossom——"

Pepita shook the small stray blossoms out of her hair.

She stopped short and dropped her arms.

"See," she said, "let him want what he will, let him come a thousand times, and I will never speak to him."

In the gardens the next Sunday they met him. Pepita was talking to a young girl whose name was Isabella, and whose brother Juan was following in the footsteps of Manuel and the rest. It was Isabella who first saw the matador, and uttered an exclamation.

"Your brother is coming," she cried, "with —yes, with Sebastiano."

José's simple face was on fire with delight, but Sebastiano looked less gay, and his step was less carelessly buoyant than it had been in the bull-ring. As he approached the group he looked only at Pepita. But Pepita looked only at José, her eyes laughing.

"Jovita is cross," she said; "she has been asking for you. She wishes to go home."

Sebastiano's eyes were fastened upon her face, upon her red lips, as she spoke. He had heard that she was like this; that she gave her glances to no man; that she was prettier than the rose in bloom, and as cruel as a young hawk, and his heart beat as he found himself near to her. Since the hour he had seen her he had thought only of how he might see her again, of how he might find her. He had made one bold plan after another, and had been forced to abandon

each of them, and then mere chance had thrown José in his path. And now the instant he approached her she was about to elude him.

He spoke a few hurried words to José. It was too early to go away; the pleasure of the day was scarcely at its height; he wished to entertain them; they must not go.

"I will go and speak to Jovita," said José, and he went, leaving the four together.

The two simpler ones were somewhat abashed by the splendor of the dashing figure; they gazed at it with mingled curiosity and joy. To be so near it was enough, without effort at conversation. Sebastiano moved to Pepita's side. A Spanish lover loses little time.

"I saw you," he said, "at the bull-fight."

Pepita looked over his shoulder and smiled at a passing woman who had greeted her. Her face dimpled, and she showed her small white teeth. It was as if she did not see the matador at all.

"It was at the bull-fight," he persisted. "Two weeks ago. You had a red flower in your hair, as you have to-day. Ever since——"

"It was not true," Pepita said gayly to Isabella, "what I said of Jovita. She is always cross, but she does not wish to go home. She met an old woman she knew in her young days, and is enjoying herself very much."

"Why did you say it?" asked Isabella with simple wonder.

"Because I wished to go home myself."

"Truly!" said Isabella. "Why is that?"

"I am not entertained so much to-day," answered Pepita.

"We will make it more amusing," said Sebastiano eagerly. "It shall be more amusing——"

"There is Jovita with her old woman now," interrupted Pepita. "I will go and speak to them."

She was gone the next instant—her movement was like the flight of a bird. Sebastiano stood and stared after her in silence until Juan addressed him respectfully.

"She is very wonderful," he said. "She changes her mind before one knows. Just before you came she said she was amused, and wished to remain."

"Perhaps," began Sebastiano, much discomfited—"perhaps it was I——"

"Ah, señor," said Juan with great politeness, "never. It is said that she always does what she chooses, and she chooses to do a thousand things."

"That is because she is so pretty," said Isabella. "She is so much prettier than all the others, and she does not care."

"A woman who is so pretty as that," remarked Juan sententiously, "need not care."

"She says," put in Isabella, "that if she does not care, others will; but if she should care, the others—" She stopped, meeting Sebastiano's eyes and becoming a little confused.

"What would happen then," he said, "if she should care?"

"I do not know," said Isabella; "but she never will—never."

But if she changed often toward others, Sebastiano found no change in her mood toward him. They did not leave the gardens until late in the day. Jovita was enjoying too greatly the comradeship of her old woman, and was ready to enjoy any pleasure offered to her. Sebastiano had a full purse, and perhaps understood old women of Jovita's class. He made himself very agreeable to these two, finding them the most comfortable seats and supplying them with things good to eat and drink, over which they gossiped together, leaving the young ones to amuse themselves as they pleased. They were very gay, the younger ones: even Manuel, elated by the presence and hospitalities of Sebastiano, made little jokes. But none of them were gayer than Pepita. She was the centre figure of the party; they all looked at her, listened to her, were led by her slightest caprice.

They went here and there, did this or that, because she wished it. It was Sebastiano who was the host of the hour, but by instinct each knew it was Pepita who was the chief guest—who must be pleased.

"Is she pleased?" the matador asked José once in a low-toned aside. "Does she not entertain herself?"

"Does she not say so?" answered José, with some slight secret misgiving.

"I do not know," said Sebastiano, looking down. "She does not speak to me."

José pushed his hat aside and rubbed his forehead. His respect for Pepita's whims had begun early in life and was founded on experience.

"She is young," he faltered—"she is very young. When she enjoys herself she——"

He paused with an uneasy movement of his shoulders. It was quite terrible to him that she should treat with such caprice and disdain so splendid and heroic a person; but he knew there was nothing to be done.

"She admires you," he said with courageous mendacity. "She saw you at the bull-fight."

"She will be there again? You will take her —the next time?" said Sebastiano.

"Yes," answered José. "She has asked that I will. It was the greatest pleasure of her life."

But it was true that during all the afternoon

she had never once spoken to Sebastiano. She had been as gay as a young bird, and the spirit of the party, her laughter, her pretty mockeries and sauciness, had carried all before them. Manuel had been reduced to hopeless slavery. Isabella had looked on in secret reverential wonder. Jovita's old woman had glanced aside again and again, nodding her head, and saying sagely: "Yes, she will always have it her own way—the little one. You are lucky in having such a grandchild. She will never be a load." But throughout it all Pepita had managed it that not one of her words had fallen directly to Sebastiano. If he spoke to her, she gave her answer to the one nearest to him. If he did not put an actual question to her, she replied merely with a laugh or a piquant grimace or gesture, which included all the rest. It was worse than coldness. To the others it was perhaps not perceptible at all; only he who searched for her eyes, who yearned and strove to meet them, knew that they never rested upon him for an instant.

And then when he so daringly arranged that José should invite him to return home with them, to what did it all come? He was lured to old Jovita's side by the fact that at the beginning of the walk Pepita kept near her, and no sooner had the old woman involved him in

tiresome talk, from which he could not escape, than the small figure flitted away and ended the journey homeward under the wing of José, and accompanied by Manuel and a certain gay little Carlos, who joked and laughed like a child.

And when, after they arrived, and the moon rose, and they sat under the vines, though there was gayety and laughter, he knew, as before, that in some mysterious manner he was excluded from it, though he seemed the honored and distinguished guest. Carlos, who sat near some shrubs in bloom, made a little wreath of white flowers, and as she played and sang to her guitar Pepita wore it on her head. Then Manuel, not to be outdone, wove a garland of pink oleander, and she threw it about her throat and sang on.

Sebastiano forgot at last to speak, and could only sit and look at her. He could see and hear nothing else. It was almost the same thing with the rest, for that matter. She was somehow the centre figure round which they all seemed to have gathered, as she sat there playing, a night breeze sometimes stirring the soft ruffled hair on her forehead, which was like black floss silk; and whatsoever she sang, however passionate and tender the wild little song, however passionate and tender her voice, her young eyes had mockery in them—mocked at the

words, the tenderness of her own voice, and at those who were moved by it; and most of all Sebastiano knew that she mocked at himself.

But he could not go away. Some strange thing had happened to him, it seemed; it was as if a spell had fallen upon him. Better to be mocked than to go away. He stayed so late that Jovita fell asleep and nodded under the shadow of the grape-vines. And at last Pepita put down her guitar and rose. She stood upright in the moonlight, and extended her pretty arms and stretched them, laughing.

"Good night," she said. "Jovita will amuse you. Already there have been too many hours in this day."

She ran into the house with no other adieu than a wave of her hand, and the next minute they could hear her singing in her room, and knew she was going to bed.

Sebastiano rose slowly.

"Good night," he said to José.

Manuel and Carlos said good-night also, and went out together, walking side by side down the white moonlit road; but Sebastiano moved away from the shadowing vines with a lingering step, and José went with him a short distance. Something in his hero's air of gravity and abstraction somewhat overawed him.

"She has not been entertained," said Sebastiano at last.

"Yes, yes," said José. "She has had pleasure all the day. And she is fond of pleasure."

"She said there had been too many hours in the day."

José rubbed his head a little reflectively for a moment, and then his countenance somewhat brightened.

"She wished to lie a little for amusement," he said affectionately. "There is no wrong in her—Pepita—but sometimes, to be amused, she will tell a little lie without sin in it, because she knows we understand her. She does not expect us to believe. We who are used to her know her better. You will also understand in time."

"Then I may come again?" asked Sebastiano.

The heavy body of José almost trembled with simple pleasure.

"It is all yours, señor," he said, with a gesture including the little house and all the grapevines and orange blossoms and oleanders. "It is poor and small, but it is yours—and we——"

Sebastiano's dark eyes rested for an instant on a little window under the eaves where a jasmine vine wreathed a thick tangle of green, starred with white flowers. And as he looked a voice broke through the fragrant barrier singing a careless, broken bit of song——

> "White, white is the jasmine flower;
> Let its stars light thee."

"It is Pepita," said José. "She always sings when she is pleased. It is always a good sign."

If her singing was a sign of pleasure, then she must have been enjoying her life greatly in the days that came afterward, for she was singing continually. As she went about her work there was always the shadow of a smile on her lips and in her eyes, as if her thoughts amused her. And she was in such gay spirits that José was enchanted. He had only one vague source of trouble: all the rest had turned out so well! It had all occurred just as he had dreamed, but scarcely dared to hope, in those bygone days when he had been hard-worked and ill-fed and ill-clad. He had a good place, and what seemed by comparison incredibly good wages. He had the nice little house, and Pepita had holiday garments as gay and pretty as any other girl, and looked, when dressed in them, gayer and ten times prettier than all the rest. That was what he had looked forward to most of all, and his end was attained. And when he walked out with her all the young fellows who were allowed to come near—and many who were not—fell in love. Yes, it was true; he saw it himself and heard it on every side. It would take the fingers of both hands to count those who were frankly enamoured, beginning with Carlos and Manuel. But it was at this point that the vague trouble

came in. And it was Pepita herself who caused it, by her treatment of her adorers. To say that she dealt out scorn to them would be to say too much; she simply dealt out nothing—and less. They might come and go; they might follow and gaze and sigh—she did not even deign to seem to know they did so, unless by chance one became too pertinacious, and then she merely transfixed him with a soft, cruelly smiling eye.

"She will not marry any of them," said José to Jovita in bewilderment.

"That will come soon enough," said Jovita. "She is pretty, and it makes her a little fool—all girls are like that; but one of these days you may look out—it will be all over. She is just the one to blaze up all at once."

"I do not think she is a fool like other girls," said José with gravity. "But she does not seem to care about love; she does not seem to know. She is not even sorry for them when they are miserable." He did not consider himself when he thought of her marriage; in truth, he put himself in the background, for if some other man filled her life and her heart his vocation would be gone, and there would be some dull hours for him before he could become used to it. But he had an innocent feeling that without this love, of which all men talked so much,

the life he wished to be bright would not be quite complete. She was too pretty and too good never to be married—never to have a home of her own and some fine fellow to love the dust she walked on. He himself was only José, and a brother was, after all, a poor substitute for a lover who could talk and sing and make jokes, and wear such a dashing air that she would be proud of him.

"That is it," he said sagely to himself. "A woman must have some one to be proud of, and she could never be proud of me. If I were Sebastiano now, it would be different."

He stopped suddenly and rubbed his head, as his habit was when he was startled or confused, and his face became rather red. Perhaps this was because he remembered that among all the rest, the magnificent, the illustrious, the beautiful Sebastiano was the one to whom she showed least grace. In fact, it was almost mysterious, her manner toward him. They had seen him often—he had come in many evenings to sit under the vines; when they went out for pleasure it somehow happened that they nearly always met him; but when he joined them Pepita became at once possessed of some strange wilful spirit. Upon reflection, José found that he had never yet heard her speak to him; it appeared to him as he thought it over that she always by

some device avoided answering directly what he said to her.

"That is a strange thing," said José, deeply mystified, as he suddenly realized this, "when one remembers how he can slay a bull. There is no one else who can slay a bull as he can. It is enough to make one weep for joy. And yet she can treat him ill."

But he did not know how ill; only Sebastiano knew that. Since the day he had stood in the arena and had seen all in a moment, as if a star had suddenly started into the sky, the small black head and rose of a face, he had lived in a fevered dream—a dream in which he pursued always something which seemed within his grasp and yet forever eluded him. What had he cared for all the rest of the women? Nothing. It had confused and angered him when they had thrown themselves in his way or sent him offerings, and when he had been told of this or that beauty who was in love with his proud bearing and dashing courage. Women! What were women? He had only cared for the bulls, for the clamor of the people, and the wild excitement of the arena. All he had wished for was to learn the best stroke, the finest leap. But this girl, who had never opened her scornful little mouth to deign him a word—who had never once allowed him to look in her eyes—

somehow this one drove him half mad. He could think of nothing else; he forgot even the bulls; he spent all the day and sometimes all the night in devising plans to entrap her into speaking, to force her to look at him. How obstinate she was! How she could elude him, as if by some magic! What had he not done that he might be near her? He had followed her everywhere. José did not know that she scarcely ever went out without his following and speaking to her. He used to spring up by her side as if he had risen out of the earth, but after the first two or three times he never succeeded in making her start or show any feeling whatever.

But that first time, and even the second, she had started. The first time she had gone to the old well for water, and as she stood resting in the shade a moment he appeared with a bouquet of beautiful strange flowers in his hand.

"God be with you!" he said, and laid the flowers down a moment and drew the water for her.

She watched him draw it, smiling just a little.

"It will be a fine day for the bull-fight," he said, when her jar was filled.

She put her hand up and shaded her working eyes as she looked at the blue sky, but she said nothing.

"Do you go to-day to the Plaza de Toros?" he asked. "You shall have good places—the best. They are good bulls to-day, black Andalusians, fierce and hard to manage. There will be fine sport. You will go?"

She leaned against the side of the well and looked down into the water, where she could see her face reflected in the cool, dark depths. The next moment Sebastiano's was reflected also. He held the flowers in his hand.

"These!" he said. "It was one of the gardeners of the king who gave them to me. They are such as the queen sometimes wears. I brought them that you might wear them at the bull-fight."

She saw their beauty reflected in the water. She would not look at them directly. They were very beautiful. She had never seen such flowers. And the queen herself had worn others like them. If any one else had brought them —but it was Sebastiano. And she remembered Sarita. Perhaps he had at some time given some to Sarita, knowing that to a country girl who knew nothing they would seem very grand. Sarita would have been sure to take them.

A wicked little look came into her face. She turned as if to take up her water-jar. But Sebastiano laid his hand upon it.

"You will not speak," he said passionately.

"No; nor even look at the flowers I bring you. You shall tell me at least what I have done. Come, now. Am I a devil? What is it?"

She put her hands behind her back and fixed her great eyes upon him for a moment. He could not say now that she had not looked at him. He thought he could keep her, did he, when she did not choose to stay? She, Pepita! She stood there staring at him for a moment, and then turned about and walked off, leaving him with her water-jar. Let him stand and watch over it all day if he would.

She went back to the house and called Jovita.

"If you want your water now," she said, "you will have to go to the well for it. It is drawn, and Señor Sebastiano is taking care of it."

"Mother of God!" said Jovita, staring, "she is mad with her Señor Sebastiano."

But not another word could she gain, and before she could reach the well she met a boy carrying the water-jar toward the house, and was told that he had been paid to bring it.

They went to the bull-fight; and, as Pepita sat among the rest, out-blooming the red flower in her hair, she heard it said that Sebastiano had never before been so magnificent, had never shown such daring and dexterity.

"He looks at Pepita," said Isabella to Carlos.

"When he entered, his eyes found her before he saw anything else."

Yes, he saw Pepita, and Pepita sat and watched him with as cool an interest as if the peril with which he played meant nothing. Her lovely eyes glowed under their drooping lashes, but it was only with a momentary excitement caused by the fierce sport; the man was nothing.

So it seemed at least to Sebastiano. It was a bad bull he encountered, savage and treacherous, and maddened by his rage. Once there was a moment when a shadow of a misstep would have cost him his life. There was no time to look at Pepita then, but when the danger was passed and he glanced toward her, she was softly waving her fan and smiling up at Manuel as if she had not even seen.

"She has a bad heart," he said to himself with fierce impatience. "It is not nature that a young girl should mock at everything, and be so cruel, and have neither feeling nor even a little fear. She has a bad heart, or none at all."

He would not look at her again; he swore it to himself. And for a short time he kept his vow; but there came a moment when something, some irresistible feeling, conquered him. It was as if he must look—as if some magic forced him, drew his eyes toward her in spite of himself. And when he had looked a sharp shock thrilled

him, for she herself was looking at him; her eyes were fixed upon him with a strange steadiness, as if perhaps they had been resting upon him for some minutes and she had forgotten herself. It was a little thing perhaps, but it was enough for his hot blood and swift-veering impulsive nature. He had just given the final stroke; he was panting, glowing. The people were shouting, rising in their seats, and repeating his name with caressing, applauding epithets attached to it. Chance had brought him near the seat in which she sat, with Jovita and José and the others near her. They were applauding with the rest, all but Pepita, who only sat and smiled. And in the midst of it Sebastiano made a swift movement, so swift that it was scarcely to be understood—a mere touch of the hand to the shoulder—and something bright, like a many-hued bird, flew over the barrier and fell upon Pepita's lap. It was the knot of gay, rich ribbon which a moment before the matador had worn.

"It is the *devisa!*" exclaimed Isabella in an awestruck tone.

"It is his *devisa*," cried José—"his *devisa*, Pepita! He has thrown it to you yourself—Sebastiano."

The next moment he was struck dumb with amazement. Pepita sat upright and broke into a little laugh. She lightly waved her fan.

"Why did he not throw it to Jovita?" she said, and with a cruel, careless little movement she swept the *devisa* from her knee; it fell, and she set her foot upon it.

"She has trodden upon it," said old Jovita. "She has done it for pride, and to show herself above others. She is ready for the devil. Some one should beat her."

"It was the *devisa!*" gasped José. "Sebastiano."

Pepita left her seat. It seemed as if something strange must have happened to her. The crimson had leaped to her cheeks, and her eyes were ablaze.

"What is it to me, his *devisa?*" she said. "I do not want it. I will not have it. Let him throw a thousand, and I will tread upon them all, one after the other. Let it lie in the dirt. Let him give it to those others, those women who want it—and him." She would go home at once; not to the pleasure-gardens, not anywhere but back to the cottage; and José followed her meekly, struck dumb. He had seen her wilful, capricious, childishly passionate, a little hard to understand, many times before, but never like this. What had occurred to her? What had Sebastiano done?

Jovita had picked up the knot of gay ribbon and brushed the dust off it, and carried it home

with her, grumbling fiercely. She was never averse to grumbling a little, and here, the saints knew, was cause.

"For pride," she kept repeating; "for pride, and to show that others are beneath her! Mother of God! the king himself is not good enough for her! Let him come and pray upon his knees that she will go to the palace and wear a crown, and he will see what she will say! It is these fools of men who spoil her, as if there had never been a pretty face before. Let them treat her as she treats them, and she will be humble enough. She was always one of the devil's children with her pride!"

But Pepita, who heard it all, said nothing, though once or twice she gave her little mocking laugh.

CHAPTER III

By the time Pepita had reached home her mood had changed—her anger was gone, or at least the signs of it were. She sang as she prepared the supper, and chatted gayly with José. It appeared that, after all, she had enjoyed the bull-fight; it had even been better than the others; she had had great pleasure. She made delightful little jests about everything; she recounted the names of the people she had seen and known; she described to him the dresses of the girls, the airs and graces of the men. She laughed, and obliged José to laugh also, and all the time she looked so pretty, with the queer light in her eyes, the gleam of her little wicked white teeth, and the brilliant spot of color on her cheeks, that she was enough to turn one's head.

The moon was at its brightest that night. All the earth was bathed in pure, magic whiteness—the whiteness which somehow seems to bring perfume and stillness and mysterious tenderness with it. Such a night! One breathed roses and orange blossoms and jasmine. Pepita sat under the roses and sang and talked, and

José smoked and was happy, but still in a state of bewilderment, though the stillness and beauty of the night soothed him and made him content to ruminate without words.

Jovita fell asleep. She always fell asleep out-of-doors on the warm summer nights, and indoors by the fire when it was winter. Pepita ceased to talk, and sang one little song after another; then she even ceased to sing, and only touched her guitar softly now and then. After a while José, who had stretched himself upon a bench, fell asleep also.

Pepita ceased to touch her guitar. She looked out at the flowers sleeping in the moonlight, and for a few minutes was very still; then she laid the guitar down and stepped out into the brightness.

In the light of the moon one cannot see the color in a face. Perhaps this was why hers seemed to be gone. She looked quite pale, and her lovely little brows were drawn together until they made a black line across her forehead. She clasped her hands behind her head, and with her face a little thrown back, so that the light fell full upon it, wandered out among the trees and fragrant flowering things. She liked the jasmine best, and over one part of the low, rough wall there climbed one which blossomed with a myriad stars. So she went and stood by it,

and looked now at it, now up and down the road, which the moon had made into a path of snow.

And as she stood there, suddenly there started up on the other side of the wall the figure she knew so well, and the next moment it had vaulted over and was close to her. Sebastiano!

She stood still, her hands still clasped behind her head, her face still upturned, and looked at him.

He folded his arms and looked at her. As for him, whether the moonlight was to blame or not, he was as pale as death.

"Yes," he said, "you are always the same. You do not change. One may come at any hour. But listen to me. You think I have come to reproach you. Why should I? I have fought bulls, but that does not teach men how to deal with women. I thought that, if a man gave you his soul and his life and the breath of his body, you would listen some day and let him think of you. You are a woman, and you are made to be loved; but there is something hard in your heart. You are proud of having mocked a man who was honest and loved you. But hear me: it is better, after all, to be less pretty and more a woman."

He stopped an instant. She had changed her position, and stood by the jasmine, stripping

the blossoms from it one by one. She began to smile and sing softly, as if to herself:

"Oh, bird at my window,
Sing but one song to me,
My lover who is light and gay."

"And more a woman," said Sebastiano. "It is women men want."

Pepita looked up and laughed; then she sang again:

"Who stirs the blossoms in the night,
Who breaks the orange flower."

Sebastiano made a swift movement and caught her wrists, his eyes flashing fire.

"That is nothing," he said. "You are woman enough. The time will come. It will not be always like this. You can be *made* to love. Yes, you are one of those who must be *made*. Then you will suffer too, and it will be good for you. You will speak then."

He paused a moment, and held her arms a little apart, looking at her with a sudden change to mournfulness.

"How pretty you are!" he said. "How little and how pretty! If you were good and gentle, and one might touch your cheek softly or stroke your hair, how one would love and serve you! No, you cannot move. I have not fought bulls for nothing. If I let you move you will strug-

gle and hurt yourself. Listen. I am going away. I will trouble you no more now. I will wait. If one waits long enough, pain ceases and one forgets. It is so with a wound, why not with what one feels for a woman? I said you could be *made* to love; but let that be left for another man to do. I want no love like that. I want a woman. Some day you will not cast the *devisa* under your feet. You will take it and hide it in your breast. It will not be mine, but some other man's who loves you less. I loved you, I was mad for you; but it shall cease. It is better to think only of the bulls than to play the fool for a woman who has no love in her heart. You are pretty, but that is not everything. You can work spells, but a man can break through them. There! Go!"

He gave her one long look, flung her hands aside, and had vaulted the wall and was gone himself one moment later.

Pepita stood still with clinched hands dropped at her side, staring with wide fierce eyes down the white moonlit road.

The next evening José came home from his work later than usual. He came down the road with a drooping head and a slow and heavy step. When he sat down to his food he ate but little, and as he bent over his soup he heard Jovita scolding.

"It is gone," she was saying. "You took it, and have thrown it away."

"Was it not mine?" said Pepita. "It was mine. I cared nothing for it, and have done what I chose with it."

José lifted his head and listened.

"What has happened?" he asked.

"She has thrown away the *devisa*, which I had saved," answered Jovita. "I laid it away, and she has taken it. What harm did it do her that it should lie out of her sight in peace?"

"Did you do that?" José said to Pepita.

"Was it meant for her?" said Pepita. "I told you he ought to have thrown it to her and not to me."

José broke a piece of bread and crumbled it on the table mechanically.

"You need not have done that," he said. "I wish you had left it in its place. It did no hurt, and we shall not see him again. He is not coming any more. And soon he goes away; and who knows what may happen?"

Pepita walked out of the house without speaking. She did not come back for a long time, and they did not know where she had gone; but as that was her way when she was in a naughty humor, they were not anxious about her.

When she returned at last the moon was shining again, and Jovita was asleep in the shadow

of the vines, and José sat on the bench outside the door, smoking.

Pepita sat down on the threshold and rested her head against the side of the door. She said nothing at all, and only looked out at the dew-laden flowers sparkling in the garden.

There was silence for several minutes, and then José turned uneasily and spoke.

"Yes," he said, "he will not come again; and soon he goes away. It is for the best. He is very strong and determined. Perhaps that comes of fighting bulls. He said he wanted you, but you did not want him, so he must forget about you. He must cease to think of you or hear of you. He asked me as a friend not to let him see me for a while, until it was over. To see me would remind him of you, and that would not do. He asked it as a friend—there was no unkindness—he is my friend, yes, though he is Sebastiano and I am only a poor fellow who works hard. It will all be as well as ever between us when it is all done with and we meet again. If you had wanted him we should have been brothers."

Pepita sat still. What strange thing had happened to her? She did not know. Something was the matter with her breathing. Something hurt her side—labored in it with heavy beatings like blows which suffocated her. She shut her

hands and drove the nails into her palms. She could not have spoken for the world.

Before José could say more she rose with fierce suddenness, and passed him, and was gone again.

The poor fellow looked after her small swift form mournfully.

"If she had wanted him," he said, "he would have made her a good husband, and we should have been brothers. But she is not easy to please, and she would not give one a chance who did not please her at first. And there is no one who slays a bull as he does!"

Pepita flew like a bird until she reached the low wall where the jasmine grew, at the spot where she had stood the night before. There she stopped, panting. The breath of the jasmine filled all the air about her. She looked up the white road.

A strange new passion filled her. She did not know whether it was anger or not, but if it was anger it was of a new kind, with more pain in it than she was used to. He would not come again—not at all again! He would not appear at her side as if he had sprung from the earth; he would not follow her or plead with her, or look at her every moment he was near her; he would not try to make her speak. Only last night he was here in this very spot, and now he would never speak like that again. He would forget her, not care for her—forget her, Pepita.

She would not believe it. She knew he could not—they never did; they always loved her best and wanted no one else. And still the labored throbbing went on in her side and she panted for breath.

"Come back," she cried, looking up the white road. "I tell you to come back. You shall. Do you hear? I tell you—I—Pepita!"

But there was no answer, no sound of any footstep, no sign of any advancing shadow. The road stretched out its white length in utter solitude, and a strange, wild look came into her beautiful little face.

"Do you not hear?" she persisted. "I will not speak to you if you do come; I will give you nothing; I will not look at you; but you shall come because I will it—because I am Pepita."

Still there was only silence and loneliness. Suddenly she flung out her hands and stamped her foot.

"I will kill you," she said. "If you do not come—I will kill you!"

Then almost immediately she put her clinched hand to her beating side and sank down upon the earth, burying her face in the dew-wet fragrant tangle of the jasmine.

But he did not come back. And yet every night she went and stood by the low wall, and

looked up the white road and watched and waited. For a long time she did not know what she intended to do if he should appear. All was vague in her mind. At first it seemed only as if her whole being went out into the fierce demand that he should come, and the obstinate proud belief that it must be as she wished—that he could not resist and disobey her. Who had ever disobeyed her? Not José; not Jovita, for all her grumblings; not any of those others. And was it likely that he who had adored her more than all the rest, who had watched her with that hungry love in his eyes, could do what no other had ever done? She told herself this over and over again; but he did not come. She began to feel a feverish eagerness when she dressed herself, a passionate desire to be pretty—to be prettier than ever before. She used to stand before her scrap of looking-glass to try on one bit of simple finery after another, twisting up the soft cloud of her hair afresh a dozen times a day, and putting a fresh flower in it. She went to the well again and again and filled her jar, and emptied and filled it again, and lingered, and tried not to look round when she heard a footstep; but the right one never came, though her heart's throbbing shook her many times in false alarm. She was only a child—a passionate Spanish child, igno-

rant and full of fierce young natural impulses—and she knew only childish, crude methods. So she made herself beautiful, and showed herself in the places where she thought he would see her and be unable to resist her will and her beauty; but though she made José take her here and there and everywhere, she never saw Sebastiano but once. It was in the Public Garden, where they had first met. They were sitting in the shade refreshing themselves with wine, and he came toward them, not at first seeing them. Pepita clutched her fan until she broke it, and a wild exultation sprang in her breast. She had seen before she left home that she had never before been so pretty. There had come into her face a new look—a fire that had burned deeper every charm. He would see—he would see that she was Pepita still, and that he could not keep his word if she chose—if she chose.

He drew nearer and nearer, still not seeing them. He was talking to the three companions who were with him. He was richly dressed, and looked stronger than ever, and more handsome and graceful. He came still nearer. No, she would not speak to him. No! He looked up and his eye fell upon them—upon José and Jovita and Pepita! He drew back a step and stood still; he made a low bow to them, a grand bow, such as he made when he was in the bull-

ring and the people applauded. He turned away and passed on. Yes, without a word.

José sighed a deep and mournful sigh and rose to his feet.

"Come," he said. "We must go. It is best not to stay. He does not wish to see us, and he asked that I would keep away. It is a pity —but he asked it."

The breath was coming in sharp little puffs through Pepita's delicate nostrils. It was as if she had been struck a blow. She walked home as in a sort of delirium; she saw none of those who turned to look at her. She walked faster and faster. Jovita could not keep pace with her.

"What is the matter?" said the old woman. "You walk as if you had a devil in you. Your breath is all gone. Are you mad?"

At night, when they sat together, Pepita spoke of the next bull-fight. José must take her. She wished to go.

"It is better that we should not go there," said José. "You know why. He will not like to see you. You saw how it was to-day. He is not angry, only he is determined not to be reminded. Soon he will go away, and then you shall go with me as often as you wish; but not now. After this week he will be far away—far away."

"I will go now," said Pepita. "I will go

without you if you will not take me. Isabella and Juan and Manuel will be glad enough. Let him—let him look at his bulls."

She did not know that it was desperation that had seized upon her; she thought it was defiance. Yes, yes, she told herself breathlessly, he should see her laugh and talk with Manuel and Carlos and Juan and the rest; and then he would be punished.

She would hear nothing that José said. She would go—she would go. No other bull-fight but this would please her.

She could scarcely live until the day arrived. She had made for herself a new gala-dress; she had a new fan and a necklace she had bought out of her little savings.

There was a great crowd. It was known that Sebastiano was to go away, and many had come for that reason, wishing to see him for the last time in the season.

At first Pepita was gayer than her adorers had ever seen her. She deigned to talk and smile and listen. She had the restlessness and color of some brilliant-winged bird. Isabella looked at her in wonder.

"She was never like this before," she whispered to Juan.

And then Sebastiano came, and for the time they saw only him.

When at last the bull lay an inert mass in the dust, and the people shouted and almost flung themselves from their places into the arena in their excitement, and the gay and superb actor bowed to them—bowed to them again and again —Pepita sat like a little image of stone. She was quite colorless, and her eyes were fixed. She seemed to hear and see nothing until some one spoke to her. Then she rose and looked at Manuel.

"It is too hot," she said in a low voice not like her own. "I must go. The sun. I have a pain in my head. Come."

He had not lifted his eyes once to her. It was as if she had not lived—as if she had been Isabella or Carmenita—and he did not give her a thought. No, he had not once looked up.

The next day he was gone. She heard José say so to Jovita, who grumbled loudly. She had forgotten her old distaste for these "fine ones."

"And but for her humors he would have stayed," she said. "What more does she want than a fine well-built man like that—a man who is well-to-do, and whom every other girl would dance for joy to get? But no; nothing but a prince for her. Well, we shall see. She will work for her bread herself at last, and serve the other women who have homes and husbands."

In the middle of the night she was awakened from her slumbers by something—she knew not what. Soon she perceived it was Pepita, trembling.

"What is it now?" demanded the old woman.

"I stayed out in the dew too long," said Pepita, "and I am cold."

"That is well," said Jovita. "Get chilled through and have a fever, that we may ruin ourselves with doctors' bills; and all because you choose to remain in the night air when you should be asleep."

Pepita lay on her pillow, her eyes wide open in the darkness, her small hot hand clutching against her breast something she had hung round her neck by a bit of ribbon. It was the *devisa* she had stolen from Jovita, and which had not been thrown away at all. In the daytime it was hidden in the bosom of her dress; at night it hung by a cord and her hand held it. By this time a sort of terror had mingled itself with her passion of anger and pain, and she lay trembling because she was saying to herself again and again:

"I am like Sarita! I am like Sarita!"

She said it to herself a thousand times in the weeks and months which followed, and which seemed to her helplessness like years. She said it in as many moods as there were hours of the

day. Sometimes with wild unreasoning childish rage; sometimes with a shock of fear; sometimes in a frenzy of shame; sometimes, as she stood and looked up the road, her cheeks pale, her eyes dilated with self-pity and tears.

"I am like Sarita! Yes—Sarita!"

She remembered with superstitious tremor all the things that had been said to her of the punishment that would fall upon her because of her hard-heartedness. She remembered Jovita's prophecies, and how she had mocked them; how cruel she had been to those who suffered for her; how she had laughed in their faces and turned away from their sighs. She remembered Felipe, whom she had not spared one pang—Felipe, at whom she had only stared in scorn when he wept and wrung his hands before her. Had he felt like this when she sent him back to Seville to despair?

A cruel fever of restlessness burned her. She could find pleasure no more in the novelties of the city, in the gayeties of the gardens, in her own beauty.

Sometimes she was sure it was magic—the evil eye. And she slipped away, poor child! and knelt in the still, cool church, and prayed to be delivered.

But once as she was doing this a sudden thought struck her.

"Not to think of him any more," she said, knitting her brows with yet another new pang. "Not to remember his face—not to remember his voice and the words he said! No, no!" And her rosary slipped from her fingers and fell upon the stone floor, and she picked it up and rose from her knees and went away.

All that day and night she thought and thought, and the next day went to pray again —but not that she might be delivered. She brought to the shrine at which she knelt substantial promises as offerings. Hers were not the prayers of a saint, but of a passionate, importunate child, self-willed and tempestuous. She would not have prayed if she could have hoped for help from any earthly means. She had never prayed for anything before. She had always taken what she wanted and gone her way; but she had had few needs. Now in this strange anguish she could do nothing for herself, and surely it was the place of the Virgin and the saints to help her. She stormed the painted wax figure in its niche with appeals which were innocently like demands.

Make him come back—make him come back to her! Mother of God, he must return! Make him come to the wall some night—yes, to-night! He must not know that she was like Sarita, but he must come; and whatsoever she did or said

he must not go away again. She would sell her new necklace; the silver comb her mother had left her—the comb her father had given her mother in the days of their courtship; she would do some work, and give to the Holy Mother some candles and flowers; but he must come back, and he must not go away again whatsoever she did.

She knelt upon the stone floor, her hands wrung together, pouring forth the same words breathlessly over and over, each reiteration more intense than the last, all her young strength going out into the appeal.

And still she had not yet reached the point of knowing what she should do and say when he came.

When she tried to rise to her feet she was obliged to make two efforts before she succeeded. She had given such a passion of strength to her siege that she was almost exhausted, and she went out into the dazzling sunlight trembling. She did this day after day, day after day, and at night she waited by the wall, but the road was always the same.

And she could hear nothing—not a word. She could not ask, even though sometimes as she sat and gazed at José with hungry eyes it seemed as if she must drop dead if he did not speak. But he did not speak because he could have told her but little, and was quite secure

She fell upon the altar steps shuddering and sobbing like a beaten child.

in his belief that the mere mention of Sebastiano's name angered her.

So the time went by—weeks and months—and at last one evening she went to the church and prayed a new prayer.

"Sacred Mother," she said, "I have sold the comb and the necklace, and I have worked and can keep my word. I have bought a little golden heart. And if he comes"—in a fainter whisper—"if he comes I will say nothing ill to him."

That night, for the first time, she heard of Sebastiano.

Little Carlos came in and was full of news.

"They say that Sebastiano has had great success, and that perhaps he will go to America."

"Where is America?" asked Jovita.

"It is at the other end of the world, and never yet have the people seen a bull-fight."

"Never?" said José, staring. "That is impossible!"

"It is true," answered Carlos. "And they are rich, and like new things; and the king has spoken of sending for Sebastiano. He will be rich enough to build a palace for his old age."

A few days later, in the dusk of the evening, there crept into the church a little figure familiar to the painted saints and the waxen Virgin. But to-day it wore a changed aspect. It moved slowly at first, reluctantly; the brilliant little

face was pale; the eyes wild with torture. A moment it stood before the altar, and then flung up its arms with a fierce gesture.

"Mother of God," it cried brokenly, "then if it must be so—tell him—tell him that I am like Sarita!" and fell upon the altar steps shuddering and sobbing like a beaten child.

CHAPTER IV

And yet it was again weeks and weeks before she heard another word. In those weeks there were times when she hated José because he never once spoke of what she wished to hear. She could not speak herself—she could not ask questions; she could only wait—hungry and desolate. They would not even say—these people—whether he had gone to the king of America or not; whether he was at the other end of the world, or whether he was only in some other city. The truth was that José had innocently cautioned the others against speaking of one whom Pepita disliked to hear of.

"She does not like him," he said sorrowfully. "Girls are like that sometimes. It makes her angry when one talks of him."

But slow as he was, he could not help seeing in time that something was wrong with Pepita. Sometimes she scarcely talked at all, and she did not flame up when Jovita grumbled; it seemed as if she scarcely heard. Her eyes had grown bigger, too, and there was a burning light in them. They always appeared to be asking

something; often he found himself obliged to look up, and saw them fixed upon him, as if they meant to wrest something from him. The careless birdlike look had gone, the careless birdlike laughter and mocking. He began gradually to fancy she was always thinking of something that hurt and excited her. But then there was nothing. She had all she wanted. She had as many trinkets as the other girls; she had even more. She had so little work to do that she had sought some outside her home to fill her spare moments, and she loved no one. There was not a man she knew who would not have come if she had smiled. What, then, could it be? And how pretty she was! Prettier than ever; prettier because of the burning look in her eyes, and—and something else he could not explain; a kind of restless grace of movement, as if she was always on the alert.

"Are you not pleased with Madrid any longer?" he asked her once.

"Yes," she answered.

"Do you want anything?"

"No."

"It seems to me," he said slowly and with much caution, "that you do not amuse yourself as you did at first."

"It is not so new," she said; "but there is still pleasure enough." And for a moment she

kept her great eager eyes fixed upon him, and then she moved slowly toward him and touched him with a soft touch on his big clumsy shoulder and said: "You are a good brother! You are a good brother!"

"I have always loved you," he said with simple pride. "When we were children, you know I always promised that you should see better days."

She had forgotten to count the weeks and days, or to take note of the changing seasons, when one hot day in the early summer he came in—José—with an innocent joy in his face.

He looked questioningly at Pepita two or three times and then coughed.

"You will not mind now," he said. "It is so long ago, and it is all over. Sebastiano has come back. He did not go to America; he is in Madrid to-day. He came to me in the street; he did not avoid me; he was rejoiced to see me. It appears that it is all well with him. Afterward Manuel told me. It appears there is a very pretty girl he met in Lisbon—she is here now. It is said he will marry her."

Pepita clinched her hands and stared at him with eyes that burned as never before.

"It is not true!" she said through her teeth. "It is not true!"

José fell back two steps.

"Not true?" he stammered. "Why not? They say so."

"A man who slays bulls as he does," she said, "does not forget a woman in a day."

José was lost in amazement.

"I thought you believed nothing but ill of him," he said. "What has happened? You are angry—angry."

"It is not true about the girl from Lisbon," she said. "It is a lie they amuse themselves with."

Never had innocent José been so thunderstruck. This was beyond his understanding. He was afraid to speak, and kept looking sidewise at her as he ate his soup; but she said no more.

"What has happened?" he said to himself over and over again. "Will she not allow him to marry another, though she does not want him herself?"

Later he went out again. It must be confessed that he went in the hope of seeing Sebastiano, or at least hearing of him. There was no difficulty in hearing of him. In the wineshops and at the street corners he was being talked of in every group. Of what else could people speak who knew he had returned? How there would be sport—how there would be pleasure! Life began to wear a more vivacious as-

pect. And what had he not done since he had left Madrid? Such success—such adulation! The impression among his adorers was that the whole world had been at his feet. Here and there one could hear snatches of song of which his name was the refrain. It was only because he so loved his own people that he had refused the magnificent offers made by the king of America. He had refused them; he had chosen to remain in Spain. He had come to Madrid. Soon he would appear before them again. He had even gained in strength and dexterity; and as to his good looks—ah! what a dashing, handsome fellow!

José had the good luck to see him again, even to speak to him. What fortune—what happiness! The honest fellow felt himself overjoyed. They were to be friends again.

It was quite late when he found himself walking homeward over the white road again. He had drunk wine enough to make him feel quite gay; and as he went he sang now and then a verse of a song about the joys of the bull-fight.

When he was about half-way home he thought he heard behind him the sound of rapid feet—light feet running. He stopped and looked back. What was it he saw, or thought he saw? Was it a small dark shape which flitted instantly into the shadow of the trees? It looked like a woman

who did not wish to be seen. Well, he would not look, then. What was the use of giving her trouble? He tramped on, perhaps a little more slowly. It was late for a woman to be out on the lonely road alone. It must be past midnight. Then the thought came to him that perhaps she wished to pass him. In that case he might look the other way, on the opposite side of the road. In fact, he crossed to the other side to leave the way clear, and went on good-naturedly, singing his song loudly and all out of tune. Yes, he had been right. Soon the footsteps drew nearer; the shadow within the shadow slipped past—ran swiftly. But by that time they were nearing his home, and there was a stretch of road unshaded by anything. The shadow hesitated, darted across the white space, and José, seeing it in the full light, uttered a cry, and started in pursuit. In but a few moments he had reached it and held it by the arm, feeling all the slender body breathless and panting.

"Pepita!" he cried. "It is you?"

She let the mantilla drop from her face and stood and looked at him.

"Yes," she answered, "it is Pepita; and you need not ask—I will not tell you. I have been to—to look at something—and I will tell you nothing."

He put his hand up and rubbed his forehead violently. Then he let it drop.

"I shall not ask," he said. "You would do no wrong. You are a good girl; but——"

"You think I have gone mad," she said with a sudden change of voice and a piteous little shiver. "Who knows? Perhaps some one has cast the evil eye upon me. But I have done no harm, and I shall do none."

"No," he said rather stupidly. "You would do no harm. Let us go in, then."

And without another word they went into the house, Pepita to her bed to lie awake and gaze at the darkness, José to sit with his head in his hands and thinking a thousand wild thoughts until he fell asleep.

He could not know that where he had been she had been also; that when the snatches of song had been sung she had heard them; that when the people had talked of Sebastiano she had listened; that when Sebastiano had stood in the bright light she had stood in the shadow and watched. She had not thought of danger or of being discovered. She had only thought of one thing and listened for one thing—and once she had heard this thing discussed by some chattering young chulos.

"She is a pretty young girl," they said. "Not as pretty as that other, but handsome enough.

She was a little devil, that other. But it is a mistake for a man like him to marry. How can a man feel free to risk his life gayly when he has a woman hung about his neck?"

Pepita had leaned against the wall, putting her hand to her throat.

"He will not," she whispered, growing hot all over. "No, he has not forgotten. I have given the little heart and the flowers and candles. And he could not forget while I— He will come back."

She struggled with the passionate persistence of a child. Since she would not give him up, he was hers.

But she did not know what to do. There was nothing but to wait in this fever of strange misery and unrest, which grew more cruel every day; and at the bull-fight if he would only look —perhaps—yes, if he saw her face, he would understand and come.

In the days before the great entertainment took place she was like some little savage creature at bay. She could scarcely bear to hear the voices of those who spoke to her. Once she went into the church and threw herself upon her knees as usual, but when she looked up her eyes were fierce.

"If he does not come," she cried to the waxen Virgin, "I will pray to you no more—no more."

She knew that it was blasphemy, but she did

"She is a pretty young girl," they said. "Not as pretty as that other, but handsome enough."

not care; and before she went home she bought a sharp little knife and hid it in her breast.

"This," she whispered, "this—if it is true about the girl from Lisbon; but it is not true."

For many years afterward the day of the great bull-fight was remembered. No one who saw it forgot it as long as he lived. Affairs used to date from it in the minds of many.

A year had passed since that first brilliant day when Pepita had gone forth in her first festal dress. She remembered it all as she dressed herself on this other morning. The same day seemed to have come again; the same sunshine and deep blue sky. There were the same flowers nodding their heads; Jovita was grumbling a little in her haste, just as she had done then; and in the looking-glass there was the same little figure in the bright attire—the soft black hair, the red rose, the red mouth. As she looked, a sudden triumph made her radiant.

"I have not grown ugly," she said.

No, she had not grown ugly. She was too young and strong for that, and excitement had flushed her into new brilliance.

When she found herself seated among the fluttering fans of rainbow colors, that moment's glow of exultation left her. Strangely enough, she could not help thinking of the empty church and the waxen figure before which she had knelt,

and then of the nights when she had stood watching by the wall, and then of the sharp little knife in her breast. And then came the clamor of the music and the grand entry of the moving stream of color and glitter dazzling her eyes. No; just at first she had not the power to look. Could it be she—Pepita—who felt dizzy and could not see? who could distinguish nothing in the splendid panorama of the triumphal march? And what clamor, what excitement there was on every side! "What bulls! What men!" they were saying about her.

Only she seemed, in the midst of all the loud-voiced eagerness and delight, to sit alone, a cold little figure vaguely tormented by the gayety and the voices and the color of fluttering fans and ribbons and costumes. The deep rose had fled from her face; she sat with her hands wrung on her knee and waited for one moment to come.

The great bull ran bellowing around the arena; little beribboned darts were flung at him and stuck in his shaggy shoulders; brilliant cloaks were flaunted in his face; taunting cries mocked him. He charged hither and thither in blind fury, scattering men and horses, who only returned again to the attack.

"It takes too long," communed Pepita. "It takes too long."

And then the voices began to call for Sebas-

tiano. "Sebastiano! Sebastiano!" on every side —even the grand ladies and their cavaliers clapping their hands and calling also. The beauties in the high places were always ready to see him come, and to give him a welcome when he risked his life to amuse them.

He stepped forth in his rich dress and with his gallant bearing, a more beautiful and gay figure than ever, it seemed, the excited people thought. He had grown finer, without doubt, they said. His face was a little pale, but that only made more beautiful his long dark eyes, under their dense, straight, black lashes. It was the women who said this, and who saw the richness of his dress, the colors of his *devisa*, the close curl of his crisp hair, the grace of his movement. The men saw his superb limbs, his firm step, his quick glance, his bright sword.

"Come, little slayer of bulls," they shouted, "and show us what you would have taught the people of America."

And it appeared they were not to be disappointed in their expectation of sport. They saw that when he stood before the bull and made a little mocking bow of salute, he looked into its small, furious eyes with a smile, as it drew near —a bellowing black mass, snorting and throwing up the dust. It was as ready to begin as he. It rushed upon him, and he was gone. He

played with it, led it on, defied it, eluded it. The flashing sword seemed to become a score of glittering blades; the people shouted—rose in their seats—leaned forward—laughed—mocked the bull—cried out praises of sword and man and beast—of each leap—each touch of the steel's point.

"He plays with it as if it were a little lamb," they cried. "Sebastiano! Sebastiano!"

Of what use to tell what must be seen in all its danger to be understood? The joy and exultation rose to fierce fever-heat, the cries swelled higher, faces flushed and eyes sparkled and flamed, while the brilliant figure darted, leaped, attacked, played with death as it had done scores of times before.

Only Pepita sat without color or applause—only Pepita's fan was motionless amidst all the fluttering—though her breast moved up and down, and the throbbing in her side was like the beating of a hammer. She was speaking to herself, though her lips were closed; she was speaking to Sebastiano.

"He will look soon," she was saying. "He will look as he did that first day. My eyes will make him look. They will force him to it. Listen! it is Pepita whose eyes are on you. You must feel them. You have not forgotten. No. And it is Pepita—Pepita!"

All the strength of her body and soul she threw into her gaze—all the fire of her young wildly beating heart and throbbing pulses.

"You must hear!" she said. "Pepita! Pepita!"

And unconsciously she leaned forward so that her white face and great eyes, and the little black head with the rose burning in its hair, stood out among the faces of those about her.

And he looked up and saw her, and their eyes met; and without knowing she started to her feet.

No one knew, no one but herself saw, how it happened; even she did not understand until all was past. Their eyes met, as they had done on the day a year before. No, not as they had done then, but with a strange new look. Sebastiano started; the arena swam before him; there was a second—a fatal second in which he saw only a small face without color and the red rose which was the color of blood. Then there was a roar near him—a roar among the people—a wild shriek from the women. The bull was upon him; he made a misstep, and was caught, amid the shrieks and bellows, and flung inert far out upon the hoof-trodden dust with the blood pouring from his side.

"But," they said in the wine-shops at night, "when they took him up, though they thought

him gasping in death, he had not lost himself; and as they carried him out they came upon a girl—the one who is called 'the pretty sister of José'—her brother was taking her away. She looked like one dead three days; and Sebastiano —there is a man for you!—tore the *devisa* from his shoulder and dropped it at her feet; and she snatched it up—all wet with his blood—and thrust it in her breast, and dropped like a stone. It is said that he loved her, and she had a devil of a temper and treated him badly. He is a good fellow—her brother José—and wept like a child for Sebastiano, and had begged to be allowed to nurse him, and Sebastiano will have it so."

"I am strong as an ox," José had said, weeping. "I can watch like a dog. I want neither sleep nor food, it if comes to that; and once when one of my comrades fell from a scaffold I was the only one who could nurse him without killing him with the pain. He will tell you that I nursed him well, and was never tired."

"Let him stay," said Sebastiano.

In his struggle with death, which lasted so long, it was always the large form and simple, anxious face of José he saw when he knew what passed around him, and even when the fever brought him delirious visions he was often vaguely conscious of his presence. For himself,

he did not know whether he was to live or die; but one night he found out.

It was a beautiful night which came after a long day in which those about his bed had looked at him with pitying eyes, and at last a priest had come and absolved him of his sins, and left him with a solemn, kindly blessing, with a soul clear of stain and ready for paradise.

He had fallen asleep afterward, and had dreamed not of heaven but of earth, of a red rose in soft black hair, and of a passionate little face whose large eyes glowed upon him.

And suddenly he was wide awake, and found his dream a living truth.

José was no longer in the room. The moonlight made everything clear, and upon the floor beside him knelt Pepita, her eyes fixed upon his.

"Dios! Dios!" he murmured.

"Hush!" she said. "Do not speak. It is Pepita. Look at me. They said that perhaps to-night you would die. I have prayed until I can pray no more, and when I came to José the tears were falling from his eyes, and he said perhaps you would not see the day. Then I showed him the little knife hidden in my breast, and told him if he did not let me come to you alone I would not live. I said I could force you to remain on earth. I love you—I love

you. It has all happened, that which you said would happen; and when the *devisa* fell at my feet I hid it in my breast with the other which was there before. And because I love you so, you cannot die. I will do anything you say I must do. I am Pepita, and I give myself to you. I would give my blood and my life and my soul for you. Every night I have waited by the wall in the hope that you would come. I have watched you when you did not see me. If you had not come I should have killed myself; if you die, I will drive the knife to its hilt in my heart. I can love more than those women who love so easily and so often. I knew nothing about it when I was so proud and mocked you. I know now. Mother of God! it is like a thousand deaths when one cannot see the face one wants. What hunger night and day!—one is driven mad by it!"

She bent more closely over him, crushing his unwounded hand against her heart—searching his soul with her look.

"They said there was a girl in Lisbon whom you loved," she said. "I knew it was a lie."

"Yes," he whispered, "it was a lie. Kiss me on the mouth."

His arm curved itself around her neck, and the red lips which had mocked melted upon his own.

"Did you suffer?" he murmured.

She began to sob like a child, as she had sobbed at the feet of the Virgin.

"I told you that you would suffer! It was the same thing with me. Saints of Heaven! human beings cannot bear that long. I shall not die, and I will make you forget the pain. Stay with me, and let me see your eyes and touch your lips every hour, that I may know you are Pepita, and that you have given yourself to me."

"I will stay through all the day and night," she answered. "They cannot make me go away if I do not wish it. They always give me my way. I have always had it—the Virgin herself has given it to me."

It seemed this was true. In a few months from then the people who strolled in the Public Garden on Sunday looked at a beautiful young couple who walked together.

"There are two who are mad with love for each other," it was said. "Sebastiano and his wife. She is the one he threw his *devisa* to when he thought himself a dead man. They used to call her 'the pretty sister of José.'"

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